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MILTON CRITICISM AND THE BIOGRAPHY
1779 - 1909

by

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PREFACE

The central purpose of this study has been to examine the criticism of Milton's poetry from 1779 to 1909 and to consider the relation of this criticism to the poet's biography. It will be apparent that I have treated two aspects of this subject. In the first place, I have tried to determine, whenever possible, the relationship between the individual writer's literary criticism and his attitude towards Milton's character as a man. Further, I have tried to show how this attitude towards the man affected not only the critical approach to the poetry but the final judgment and evaluation of it. Second, I have attempted to set forth the various ways in which biographical material was used to interpret Milton's poetry from the publication of Samuel Johnson's Life to the Milton Tercentenary.

I have selected 1779 as a starting point since it was only after that date that the biographical method was actually used to any great extent by Milton's critics. However, in order to give the necessary background to the development of the biographical method, I have briefly set forth Milton's position as a man and poet in the eighteenth century before Johnson. Here I have relied to a great extent upon the modern studies of Milton's eighteenth century reputation by John Walter Good and Raymond Dexter Havens. As 1909 represents the

beginning, as it were, of modern Milton criticism, I have selected that date as a stopping point.

I have not attempted to study Milton's reputation in the nineteenth century since this subject has been exhaustively studied by recent scholars. In 1931, Frank Willis Plunkett explored the references to Milton in the leading British Magazines during the Romantic Period as his doctoral dissertation at the University of Indiana. Through an inclusive study, he attempted to set forth the facts concerning popular criticism of Milton from 1779 to 1832. Shaw Wing Chan presented a study of nineteenth century Milton criticism to Stanford University in 1937 as his dissertation. His central purpose was to determine those aspects of Milton's major poems stressed most by critics as well as to decide which poems received the most attention. In 1941, as his doctoral dissertation at Harvard, James Ernest Thorpe considered the principle criticism of Milton's poetry from 1800 to 1940 to trace the evolution of the conceptions of Milton the man, the philosopher, and the artist.

I have had access to these three studies, none of which emphasizes the connection between the biography and the literary criticism as considered in this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: MILTON IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Towards him they bend
With awful reverence prone . . .

Although eighteenth century writers seldom used biographical material and historical fact related to Milton's life in their interpretation of his poetry, it is hardly correct to say that these factors did not influence the critical approach to the poet. Milton's tremendous appeal throughout the century was based primarily on aesthetics, religion, and politics, three closely related elements in eighteenth century criticism. In Milton's case, individual tags were formulated to fit each of these appeals: Milton was regarded as either the Sacred Bard, the Great Whig, or the Sublime Poet, and often as a combination of two or all three concepts. The biographical elements involved in these critical attitudes concern Milton's moral and religious character, his political principles, and his poetic genius. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that these separate approaches to Milton were not always distinct in the mind of the critic, biographer, or reader. Political and religious prejudices frequently blended, while artistic taste often identified itself with religious preference. On the other hand, some writers made sharp distinctions between the politician and the poet. Certainly the individual writer's own religious or political views often guided his hand when he chose the epithets he was to add to the ever-growing monument of Milton's fame in the eighteenth century.

As William Riley Parker points out in his recent study of Milton's contemporary reputation, the irony of that fame is that the poet who vainly hoped to be a great leader of thought in his own day "rose from the grave to stir the minds of his

countrymen."¹ Almost alone of the poems, Paradise Lost was responsible for Milton's reputation as a sublime artist and a religious poet. Havens's great study traces Milton's far-reaching poetic influence on poets from Thomson to Keats.² According to Good, the "moralizing Eighteenth Century" not only considered him the greatest of all poets, but believed that he was greatest very largely because he was the "greatest teacher of righteousness."³ The classical republican principles set forth in the prose works made his name synonymous with the various types of liberty esteemed by Whigs and Radicals. Certainly Milton's three-fold appeal offered something to almost every educated individual. To those who detested his political thought there remained Paradise Lost, exalted since Dryden's day as a poem unmatched for sublimity. To those insensitive to poetry, the epic might be taken as a true religious or moral doctrine in this century before the appearance of De Doctrina Christiana, Biblical criticism, or the Darwinian Theory made Milton's theology unsatisfactory to many readers.⁴ Radicals and Conservatives might disagree violently over the merits of The Second Defence of the English People, but most eighteenth century readers found no objections to the poet's religious ideas.⁵ Many found the three-fold appeal irresistible; that it frequently resulted in a type of hero-worship and panegyric fatal to productive literary criticism has been matter for derision or regret to succeeding critics until the present day.⁶

The religious subject of Milton's epic, the stated purpose to "justify the ways of God to men," led critics and ordinary

readers alike to exalt Paradise Lost as the greatest religious poem in the language. Dissenters in particular found the theology the most important part of the poem.⁷ This attitude produced the popular idea of Milton as the "Sacred Bard," an epithet used to characterize him throughout this period. The fervent admiration aroused by Paradise Lost as a divine poem naturally carried over to the character of the poet who could produce such a work. It is hardly exaggeration to say that by 1750 Milton occupied a sanctified position among his readers as the living ideal of piety and religious purity.

Although the biographical treatments of Milton by Elijah Fenton (1725) and Richard Burnet (1734) were definitely unsympathetic to Milton's politics, they gave the highest praise to Paradise Lost as a divine epic.⁸ Fenton, indeed, in his brief but often reprinted Life, devoted about one-fourth of his attention to that "noblest Poem" which equalled the productions of Homer and Virgil. These writers were obviously able to draw a sharp line between the poet and the politician. Other biographers were more fully in sympathy with the whole man. Jonathan Richardson's Life (1734) was the longest and most sympathetic yet published.⁹ He was primarily interested in Milton as the author of Paradise Lost, "a Poem more Instrumental than any other Human Composition, to Calm and Purify the Mind...." and lead it to thoughts of religious purity. As befitted the author of the sacred epic, Richardson presents Milton as Virtue and Piety personified. He too believes that the sublimity of Milton's subject raises his poem above the classical poets.

Thomas Birch, a zealous Whig, published Milton's prose works together with a new Life in 1738.¹⁰ He regards Milton as a man profoundly religious in deeds as well as words. He states that the poet lived by rules of goodness, justice, and mercy. As a man and poet, Milton was the "just object of universal admiration." Birch too looked upon Paradise Lost as a religious poem which would "continue as long as true taste for poetry shall remain among mankind." Two years later, Francis Peck published a biography heaping praise upon Milton's moral character with unqualified admiration given to the epic.¹¹ Thomas Newton compiled his Life of Milton (1749) from earlier writers, though he freely added his own views of Milton's character and poetry.¹² Newton was not too sympathetic to Milton's political ideas or to his Puritanism, but he gave the highest encomium to the poet's genius and to the high moral principles which could give a poem like Paradise Lost to the English nation.

Such references as these, selected from many of a similar nature, point up the connection that was made between Paradise Lost as a divine epic and the moral and religious character of its author. The religious appeal of Milton accounts to a large extent for much of the panegyric which makes up the periodical notices of him in this period, and especially for the impassioned defence of his almost holy name in the Bentley and Lauder controversies. A study of references during the period from 1735 to 1778 in the leading periodicals, including the Monthly Review, Critical Review, and the Gentleman's Magazine, shows thirty notices which praise Milton's honesty, his religion,

or his moral principles.¹³ Ten say nothing of the man but eulogize his poetry. Only thirteen notices bring charges against his character, and it is notable that the poet's detractors are most active from 1747 to 1750, the years of the Lauder controversy. Eight of the thirteen detractions charge Milton with plagiarism; five of these were written by Lauder himself. Milton's detractors, in the periodicals at least, were almost silent after 1750.

Havens points out that although the religious side of Paradise Lost naturally appealed to nonconformists like John Toland, Richard Barron, and Thomas Hollis - Anglicans, Catholics, and Deists alike revered the didactic purpose and moral tone. The widely-held view that great literature should teach true morality and religion extended Milton's reputation as a sacred poet among all classes of readers. Indeed, the phenomenal side of Milton's reputation in the eighteenth century was his great appeal to all levels of society. As the studies of Havens and Good both attest, thousands of readers placed Paradise Lost next to the Bible on their parlor tables. The few who dared publicly voice their strictures against the "Sacred Bard" were silenced by the fervent replies of Milton's admirers. When "slashing" Bentley and "forger" Lauder laid their profane hands upon Paradise Lost the reaction was somewhat similar to that provoked by the desecration of a holy relic.¹⁴

The idea that Milton's poetry was neglected before the appearance of Addison's criticism of Paradise Lost in the Spectator has been shown by Havens and others to be a highly exag-

gerated and erroneous idea. By a careful collection of early notices Havens makes it definitely clear that Milton was well-known, though not perhaps popularly acclaimed, before the eighteenth century.¹⁵ Many writers, including the two leading critics of the period, Dryden and Roscommon, gave the highest praise to Paradise Lost as a sublime poem. As the Augustan Age progressed, Milton scholarship became so active and extensive that almost any subject led to Milton.

The studies of Chan, Good, Havens, and Plunkett show that Milton's poetic fame in the eighteenth century rested largely on Paradise Lost as the sublime poem of the Christian Religion. To select for special notice writers who had something to say on this subject is to be given an almost unlimited choice, but certainly John Dennis was one of the first critics following Dryden who helped to popularize the idea of Paradise Lost as the sublime poem of English literature.¹⁶ Dennis's criticism is especially significant, for he connects the religious and aesthetic appeals in his critical theory. To support his belief that the highest poetry springs from the passions and that the highest passions are concerned with religion, he cites Milton as surpassing ancients and moderns alike in sublimity and inspiration. In his own words, Milton is "one of the greatest and most daring Genius's that has appeared in the World," and Paradise Lost is "the greatest poem that ever was written by man...." The exaltation which enabled Milton to compose the noblest passages in his epic derived from his religion and was identical with sublimity, the elevation which lifts up the soul

through strong religious emotions. Dennis's religious and moralistic point of view is attributed by Paul to the influence of Milton and Longinus.¹⁷ Both of these views of Milton, as the "Sublime Poet" and as the "Sacred Bard," became critical cant in the eighteenth century though they also reflected an adoration which in some cases bordered on deification.

Addison's famous critique on Paradise Lost in the Spectator (1712) did much to popularize these views of Milton.¹⁸ Addison frequently names Milton's religious subject "the noblest that could have entered into the thoughts of man"; he believes that it gave Milton's epic a place above those of Homer and Virgil since it dealt not with "the fate of single persons or nations, but of a whole species."¹⁹ It is significant that he judged the sublimity of the poet's style by the extent to which it equalled the sublimity of his sentiments.

In the same year, Leonard Welsted published his translation of Longinus on the Sublime. Referring to the Spectator articles, Welsted says, "It is undoubtedly true of Milton... that no man ever had a genius so happily formed for the Sublime...in his most exalted flights, piercing beyond the boundaries of the Universe, he appears to me as a vast Comet, that for want of room is ready to burst its Orb and grow eccentric."²⁰ Dowden notes that such praise was not extravagant at this time; Welsted's comments are typical of the Augustan view of Milton as the Sublime Poet.

Charles Gildon, a disciple of Dennis and constant admirer of Milton, condemns Addison's attempt to criticize Paradise Lost

by the rules of the classical epic.²¹ The basis of his charge rests on his belief that Milton's poem was by nature divine, hence above the ordinary critical conventions. Undoubtedly such opinions helped to put Paradise Lost on a pedestal where it remained, with the help of Whig panegyric, until the appearance of Johnson's Life. This widely-held view that Milton had created a type of poetry above criticism has been investigated by both Good and Havens. Francis Atterbury, Samuel Wesley, and William Warburton, among others, express ideas similar to that which Gildon formally defended.

Joseph Warton's Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope (1756) has been described as a work devoted as much to Milton as to Pope. While this is to assert too much, the frequent references Warton makes to Milton's poems, the minor poems in particular, attest to his great respect for the poet's artistry. Warton attributes to Milton "a sublime and splendid imagination, a solid and profound understanding, an exact and tenacious memory," rare talents, he notes, given to but a "few transcendent geniuses...."²² Warton gives the highest praise to Milton's minor poems as the "first efforts of a young genius" before he had studied "manners and passions." Lycidas, L'Allegro, and Il Penseroso are collectively deemed "exquisite," while the Nativity Ode holds the "seeds of that boundless imagination" which was to produce Paradise Lost. Despite his interest in the minor poems, Warton saved his greatest praise for the epic, asserting that to give attentive study to it would be rewarded with a "true taste" for poetry. To Warton, Paradise Lost was

the touchstone to the sublime and pathetic. In a tone of national shame he declares that the neglect of that poem during the Restoration period would be a perpetual monument to the bad taste of that age.

Edward Young placed Milton beside the "wisest of men" who stood "nobly smiling in distress" while they found consolation in the joys of original composition.²³ Young's famous statement, "Had Milton never wrote, Pope had been less to blame," well sums up his attitude towards the author of Paradise Lost. In Milton's blank verse he found the British Homer who would forbid English poets to be enchained by the shackles of rhyme. Milton was one of the great whose "names go round the world," the promoter of British fame and the envy of foreign genius.²⁴

Such notices as these might be expanded indefinitely "like gold to airy thinness beat," but they indicate sufficiently Milton's place as a sublime and sacred poet. That the lens through which many readers viewed Milton as a man was the divine epic Paradise Lost can hardly be denied. The idea that a great poem conveying true religious principles could only be produced by a man of comparable moral greatness, an idea indeed expressed by Milton himself, probably contributed largely to the exalted portrait that soon became a stereotype. Another important factor was the sublime itself as an inherent quality residing in the object (Paradise Lost in this case), rather than a subjective element dependent largely upon the individual perceiver. In Milton's case there seems to have been a throwback to the artist who produced the work, hence the many references to his

sublime mind and sublime soul in connection with Paradise Lost.²⁵

The remaining role which Milton played in the eighteenth century remains to be considered, the role of the Great Whig. This subject has been studied at some length by Good and Havens, while George F. Sensabaugh's recent study, That Grand Whig, Milton (1952), concerns the influence of Milton's political theory on Whig statesmen from the Restoration to the reign of Queen Anne. Sensabaugh clearly shows the adoption of Milton as the hero of the Whig cause, the specific contributions his prose writings made to English government, and starts him on his now familiar course as the defender of English civil, domestic, and religious liberties. He gives special attention to such early adherents to Milton's cause as Toland and Gildon, who proclaimed Milton as a morally great man, admired his prose works and his poetry alike. Such attitudes as this, together with the increasing public approval of his political principles as they were worked out largely through the Whig party, paved the way for the enthusiastic gathering of later Whigs and Radicals like Thomas Birch, Richard Barron, Francis Blackburne, Thomas Hollis, and Mrs. Catharine Macaulay under the Miltonic standard.

John Toland was castigated again and again by Tories who found his highly appreciative Life of Milton (1698) almost blasphemous. With this biography and his active sponsorship of the prose works and Paradise Lost, he probably did more than any other early writer towards identifying Milton with the liberal movements in English politics. Gildon and Edward Phillips did their share, however, in clearing Milton's name of the Tory ac-

cusations. Phillips's sympathetic Life appeared in 1694, together with an edition of the Letters of State. Although he was not a Whig, Phillips expressed sympathy with the Puritan side in the Great Rebellion, and replied to specific charges against his uncle's character. He did not neglect Milton's poetry, however, giving great praise to Paradise Lost and the minor poems. Sensabaugh notes that Phillips's dual praise for the man and the poet opened up a new era of Whig acclaim. On the other hand, most Tories were willing to accept Milton as a great poet, but they found his political opinions intolerable and even treasonous. Gildon's greatest efforts were in behalf of Paradise Lost, but he was also active in defence of the politician. To him, Milton was the "strenuous Defender of the Power and the Liberty of the People...." 26

Thomas Hollis, the "true Whig," as he called himself, regarded Milton as the "arch-defender of liberty." Hollis stands in the forefront of the later generation of Whigs and Radicals who exalted the republican poet. He apparently made the popularization of Milton's prose one of the main activities of his life.²⁷ Thomas Birch, previously mentioned as Milton's biographer, considered him the symbol of "true and absolute freedom."²⁸ Richard Barron, religious and political radical described as a "red republican," revised Birch's Life (1753) and called for a revival of Milton's ideas on liberty as a necessary reform to combat "venality and corruption" in the nation. He exclaimed, "Milton in particular ought to be read and studied by all our young Gentlemen as an Oracle."²⁹ James Thomson, one of the many

eighteenth century poets influenced by Milton's blank verse style and himself the author of Liberty, wrote a preface to Areopagitica in 1738. Auditor William Benson, another Whig, erected a monument to Milton in Westminster Abbey and published a study of his versification. William Roscoe and Nicholas Hardinge were two Whig writers who ardently admired Milton and promoted his fame as the Great Whig.³⁰ Mrs. Catharine Macaulay, the intrepid republican historian, honored Milton in her pamphlets as the great champion of liberty.³¹

To look at the other side of these clearly marked party lines is to see that the Tory opposition to Milton had tags of its own such as "King-Killer," "notorious traitor," and Dr. Johnson's famous remark, "surly republican." The strong antipathy to Milton as a politician shown in these epithets was most prevalent in the first half of the century, but the Tory invective was never wholly silenced by the indignant voices of Milton's defenders. The portrait of the Great Whig was a favorite target of the Tories; the resulting controversies colored literary criticism for two hundred years.

Sensabaugh sets forth three Tory attacks near the beginning of the century as typical examples of the Conservative reaction. Offspring Blackall defended King Charles I and preached against Toland's biography of Milton in the House of Commons in 1699.³² In the same year, John Gilbert attacked Milton and his Whig followers in a sermon which identified the Puritan poet with "horrid Murtherers, Parricides, Miscreants, Sons of Belial... the greatest enemies of God and the King. . . ."³³

Also in 1699, William Barron denounced John Toland as a man who dared "to recommend an Author, that once occasion'd several hours Debate in the House of Commons, whether he should not be Hang'd, and had some of his now admired Books order'd, and actually Burnt by the Hands of the Common Hangman."³⁴ Barron derided Toland's praise of Milton's character and added that the same praise might be given the devil since both equally abused their great abilities. In 1701, Edward Ward, a Jacobite pamphleteer, made Milton the founder of the notorious Calves-Head Club, rumored to be the most blasphemous political group of the day. However, as Sensabaugh concludes, the Tory attempt to destroy the Whig ideal of Milton and the liberal principles which were synonymous with his name was doomed to fail:

....Jacobitism weakened as the new century unrolled, Whig principles continued to triumph in men's minds, and more and more flocked to Milton's poetical and political standard.³⁵

Nevertheless, the Tories continued to attack Milton's politics, even if they revered his poetry as enthusiastically as did the most ardent republican. His name was recalled in the "almost unvarying litany" against Harrington, Sydney, and Milton, whether or not they had ever read a line of his prose works.³⁶ He was always remembered in the frequent references to "Commonwealth-men" and "Republicans." Sometimes admirers of his poetry felt it necessary to apologize for his politics. Thus Defoe apologized for that "Great Man Milton," who, "setting aside Republican Principles, deserves an Eternal Commemoration"³⁷

An interesting Whig-Tory debate over political interpretations of Paradise Lost occurred in the London Chronicle (1763-1764).³⁸ The debate started with Z's assertion that the epic represented Milton's confession and apology for his own political actions. Z identified Satan and the fallen angels with the modern Whigs, maintaining that the poet meant "to destroy the Whig party by deriving it from such odious originals." The Whigs soon answered this attack on "our great Milton" and their party with their own interpretations of Paradise Lost. In his reply to Z, A. S. F. brought forth John Upton's view that Milton could easily be the stalwart Abdiel and that "Bacchus and his Revellers" might represent Milton's picture of King Charles I and his court. Further, Upton interpreted Samson Agonistes as a political allegory representing Milton among the Restoration Philistines, but added that "these mystical and political allegorical reveries have more amusement in them, than solid truth, and savor but little of cool criticism, where the head is required to be free from fumes and vapours. . . ." ³⁹ But as Whiting points out, that Upton's "reveries" were more true than he thought would be the opinion of many later critics. Another defender of Milton, A. B., defined the principles of Whig liberty and added that the Tories corresponded much more closely to Satan as "innovators, disturbers of the peace, and arbitrary dictators." Expressing certainty that sensible men would treat Z's accusations with contempt, he eulogized Milton, the republican governments of Greece and Rome, and warned Z that if he continued to promulgate the "principles of slavery" he would

be branded a traitor.

This controversy is significant for several reasons. In the first place, the replies to Z show the strong Whig propensity to defend Milton's name from any derogatory attack.⁴⁰ Further, the references to political and personal allusions in Samson Agonistes and Paradise Lost, though used as political ammunition rather than as valid material for disinterested literary criticism, definitely anticipate the later methods of critics who used both Milton's biography and the history of his age in their interpretations of his poetry. The fact that Upton did not take his "reveries" seriously as a means of understanding Samson Agonistes and Paradise Lost points up the great difference between Milton criticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The earlier critics were largely concerned with aesthetic problems, literary forms and rules, and the religious, didactic element. Their extreme interest in these matters may be partly responsible for their failure to use the growing amounts of biographical material in their criticism. But other factors were undoubtedly important. As we have seen, the Whig tendency to exalt Milton often placed him above the reach of criticism into the higher spheres of panegyric. Yet this has its other side too. Since their great admiration made them interested in every aspect of Milton's character and career, it is to be expected that biographical criticism would first be used by writers holding liberal views. The Tories, committed at the outset to deride or play down Milton as a man, necessarily cut themselves off from the biographical method, unless it were

used, as in the case of Z, to grind their own political axes. Most Tory writers drew rather sharp distinctions between the man and the poet, as may be seen in the remarks of Fenton, Newton, William Warburton, Oliver Goldsmith, James Boswell, Thomas Warton, and the great Tory himself, Dr. Johnson. Their opposition to Milton's politics and personal character as a man guarantees that their considerations of his poetry will largely concern aesthetic and religious elements. The eventual result of these approaches dependent upon individual political sympathies was two distinct methods of literary criticism which will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II
MILTON CRITICISM: 1779-1830

. . . out flew
Millions of flaming swords . . .

Samuel Johnson's Life of Milton (1779) raised the floodgates to a stream of critical controversy and investigation which persisted well into the nineteenth century.¹ There were few who doubted that the great Tory's antipathy to Milton's political conduct highly colored his interpretation of the poet's character. The biographical section (approximately two-thirds of the Life) displays all of Johnson's Tory prejudices to the republican author of The Second Defence of the People of England.

The main points of Johnson's treatment of Milton's character may be considered under two heads: domestic and political. His depiction of Milton as a private citizen is based largely on Edward Phillips's Life, but to this Johnson has brought a good share of suspicions and hypotheses which twist Phillips's primarily factual account into a forbidding portrait of a morose egoist. The qualities of rebelliousness and perverse egotism which Johnson emphasizes are found even in Milton's early life. The poet left Cambridge, "alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governors, or his own captious perverseness."² While he was still at Cambridge, "the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation." Milton's early hostility to the Anglican church appears in Lycidas, and, according to Johnson, some lines in the poem threaten its extermination. Curiously enough, of all the aspersions cast on Milton's early character, Johnson's statement that Milton was one of the last students at

Cambridge "to suffer the indignity of corporal punishment" aroused the greatest resentment among contemporary readers.³

Johnson pictures Milton as "severe and arbitrary" in his family relations. Mary Powell left her husband's house after a few weeks of marriage because she could not stand the "sullen gloom." She left him in disgust, and she "was brought back only by terror."⁴ Johnson infers that the poet's great egotism was so injured by her failure to return from Oxfordshire that he was provoked to violent resentment; to punish her disobedience he wrote and published his divorce tracts. Johnson notes that it was about this time that Milton became an enemy to the Presbyterians: "He that changes his party by his humor, is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest; he loves himself rather than truth."⁵ Thus the divorce tracts were the direct off-spring of his egotism and his view of woman's inferiority. Johnson does give Milton grudging credit for receiving the Powell family after the Royalist cause was lost, but he states flatly that Milton did not love his first wife. Catherine Woodcock was "more a favorite, but her life was short." Milton's third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, receives notice only as a dominating woman who cheated Milton's daughters after the poet's death. Milton married her only because he needed a nurse and companion in his helpless old age.⁶

The final condemnation of Milton's domestic character is tied in with Johnson's dislike of Milton's republicanism.

The "Turkish contempt of females" that he finds in the writings implies that Milton treated his wives and daughters as inferior beings.

That his daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.⁷

This hatred of authority which Johnson makes the key to Milton's political conduct appeared in his undergraduate days, but when he first entered the controversies of this times "and lent his breath to blow the flames of contention" he adopted the "puritanical savageness of manners" which became a marked feature of his political career. The displeasing aspects of Milton's personality which Johnson sees in the domestic life he finds also in the controversial works. His "gloomy seriousness" is the most offensive part of the pamphlets. "Such is his malignity that hell grows darker at his frown."⁸ In the Salmasius controversy, Milton "delighted himself" with the idea that he had shortened his opponent's life.

Johnson's heaviest artillery is saved for the poet's relations with Cromwell. Milton is bitterly denounced for the "grossness of his flattery" of the Protector in The Second Defence of the People of England. After Cromwell dismissed the parliament and assumed the title of Protector, Milton, "having now tasted the honey of publick employment," continued to serve as Latin Secretary, but at the cost of his personal integrity. He betrayed to Cromwell's usurped power the liberty he had formerly defended.

Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery; that he, who had justified the murder of his king, for some acts which to him seemed unlawful, should now sell his services, and his flatteries, to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.⁹

To Johnson, Milton was a "surly and acrimonious republican," but worse than this is his claim that the republicanism was based on an "envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence...in petulant impatience of control, and pride disdainful of superiority."¹⁰ The Tory prejudices stand out most clearly in the following statement:

He hated monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be expected that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than to establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.¹¹

Most critics and reviewers have cited such statements as the foregoing to show that Johnson's interpretation of Milton's character was all black. Some have gone further and assumed that his prejudices against Milton's personal character automatically influenced his criticism of the poetry. But this appears to be a fallacy; it is certainly an oversimplification. Interspersed throughout the Life, bitter and biased as it is, are patches of respectful praise which pieced together reveal a dichotomy in Johnson's approach to the poet on the one hand and the "surly republican" on the other. Though he deeply resents Milton's opposition to the established church, the Tory critic never describes Milton as anything but deeply pious and

devout. To this side of Milton's character he gives unqualified praise:

Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him, who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and efficaciously after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer.... 12

That Johnson should cite Paradise Lost to show that Milton's religious beliefs were sincere is consistent with his overall approach to the poet. Any facet of Milton's character which Johnson relates to the poetry receives high praise. Even Milton's great egotism, the source of his rebellious pride and domestic intolerance, is judged as a natural requisite for the production of Paradise Lost. In his discussion of The Reason of Church Government, Johnson states:

In his book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation, but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers; and promises to undertake something...that may be of use and honour to his country...From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the Paradise Lost.¹³

In fact, in the very selection of a subject for his epic, Milton was drawn only to themes which he considered suitable to his great powers. Thus his egotism was a prerequisite to the final selection of his great subject. When Johnson describes Milton's "humble dignity" the praise seems incongruous until it is seen to be in connection with Milton's services to literature. This is but one of the attainments "that entitle this great author to our

eneration."

In a recent study, Jean H. Hagstrum points out that the "literary character" and the "personal character" of an author must be distinguished in Johnson's literary criticism.¹⁴ The personal character deals with biographical facts and includes the writer's moral qualities. The literary character, on the other hand, is "a summary of subjective elements of mind and heart, but only of those relevant to the literary qualifications of the author."¹⁵ This distinction between man and poet is especially true of the Life of Milton. Hagstrum adds that "neither Johnson nor his contemporaries confused the moral with the literary personality of the author, however dependent one may have seemed to be upon the other."¹⁶ Johnson's criticism of Milton's poetry is based on aesthetic principles and the literary character he formulated of the poet. This precludes the use of much biographical material in the interpretation of the poetry.

Johnson's literary character of Milton relates directly to his criticism of Paradise Lost:

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the progress, are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which the materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind might be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts...The characteristic quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantick loftiness. He can please when pleasure is

required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.¹⁷

In the epic Milton's purpose was "the most useful and the most arduous; to vindicate the ways of God to man; to shew the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law." In achieving this purpose Milton exceeded every other poet. "Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all other greatness shrinks away." Though he finds some defects in the epic, his great praise dwarfs all strictures.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God, in such a manner as excites reverence, and confirms piety.¹⁸

This is far removed from the "puritanical savageness of manners" noted in Milton's political conduct. Only a few writers have accused Johnson of being personally prejudiced in his criticism of Paradise Lost.¹⁹

Johnson's criticism of Milton's other poems is less extensive and on the whole much less favorable, and it is this fact which has led many critics to assert that he vented his spleen on the minor poems as he did on Milton's personal character. Whig and Tory reviewers alike stated that Johnson's harsh strictures on Lycidas resulted from his great animosity to the republican poet. Good's modern study of Milton's reputation in this period follows the same trend:

Johnson's view of Samson Agonistes was adverse

to Milton...so was his estimate of the smaller pieces and the Latin verses of Milton. Johnson ...gave grudging praise to the Companion poems, and an ample measure of applause to Paradise Lost. But he poured forth his utmost bitterness against Comus and Lycidas.²⁰

Johnson's condemnation of Lycidas is now famous as an example of erroneous criticism. But it is important to note that Lycidas fails in Johnson's view because it is a pastoral poem and not because it was written by the author of the divorce tracts. The most cursory inspection of Johnson's other criticism shows that he condemned not only Lycidas but all poems of this type. Thus whether the pastoral be by Pope, Cowley, Fenton, Shenstone, or Lyttelton it receives Johnson's harshest strictures. Indeed, of Lyttelton's Progress of Love he says, "it is sufficient blame to say that it is a pastoral."

Similarly, Johnson's lack of appreciation of Milton's sonnets, also cited as a result of his prejudice against the republican, derives from his earlier statement in the Dictionary that the sonnet is not suited to the English language. Furthermore, in his delineation of Milton's literary character Johnson describes Milton's element as the great - "his natural port is gigantick loftiness." His talent was not suited to the confines of a fourteen line poem. It seems not malignity but critical principles which dictated his statement that "of the best [of Milton's sonnets] it can only be said that they are not bad...."

Comus receives a detailed analysis by Johnson. He calls the masque Milton's greatest juvenile performance

and says that it represents "the dawn or twilight of Paradise Lost." It "exhibits likewise his power of description and his vigour of sentiment employed in the defence of virtue." The work is "truly poetical." However, Johnson finds it deficient as a drama. The action is judged improbable and the dialogue tedious. "It is a drama in the epic style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive."²¹

Johnson devotes only one short paragraph to Paradise Regained, and his praise is qualified but high. "It was not to be supposed that the writer of Paradise Lost could ever write without great effusions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wisdom."²² He finds the basis of the poem narrow and adds that a dialogue without action cannot please like "an union of the narrative and dramattick powers." But if the poem had been written by another poet, it would have received universal praise. The poem has been "too much depreciated." The criticism of both Comus and Paradise Regained are unbiased and show Johnson's practice of viewing the work of art as "a revelation of the powers of the author."

Johnson's most extended criticism of Samson Agonistes appeared in The Rambler in 1751. At that time he criticized the drama according to Aristotelian rules and concluded that "it must be allowed to want a middle, since nothing passes between the first act and the last, that either hastens or delays the death of Samson."²³ He found sometimes "unsuitableness of thoughts to the general character of the poem,"

"allusions to low and trivial objects" and "verbal conceits." Each of these violates Johnson's critical code. On the positive side, he described the drama as "illuminated with genius and enriched with learning," and found "just sentiments, maxims of wisdom, and oracles of piety...." The Rambler essay concludes as follows:

Such are the faults and such the beauties of Samson Agonistes, which I have shewn with no other purpose than to promote the knowledge of true criticism. The everlasting verdure of Milton's laurels has nothing to fear from the blasts of malignity; nor can my attempt produce any other effect, than to strengthen their shoots by lopping their luxuriance.²⁴

The criticism of Samson which appears in the Life is a brief summary of the Rambler essay. Here Johnson concludes that in spite of "many particular beauties, many just sentiments, and many striking lines," Milton was not a good dramatist. The poet had much knowledge from books, but he had little experience in the world. This is the most obvious instance where Johnson attempts to use biographical fact in his literary criticism of Milton's poetry, but it is certainly not evident that his feelings towards the man prompted the unfavorable judgments of Samson Agonistes.

Johnson gives his full literary character of Milton to conclude the criticism. When compared to the preceding personal biography, the below quotation stands out as an outstanding example of Johnson's critical method.

He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he

neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise, nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in his blindness, but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous; and his work is not the greatest of heroick poems, only because it is not the first.²⁵

Critical reactions to Johnson's Life fall easily into two groups: those defending Milton and those supporting the Tory biographer. Most writers took the side of the poet in agreeing that Dr. Johnson had unjustly misrepresented Milton's personal character. Some insisted further that he had allowed his prejudices to influence his estimate of the poetry. Replies to Johnson and vindications of Milton ranged from emotional hysteria to bitter invective. Attempts to refute Johnson took the form of books, new biographies of Milton, periodical articles, and personal correspondence. On the other side (sides were almost invariably taken in this matter) Johnson had his ardent supporters, but they were far too few to redeem or save the great Tory from Milton's avid defenders.

Good has explained the reactions to Johnson's Life as a direct manifestation of the growing Romantic Movement and its adoption of the Puritan poet as its particular idol. The vehement defence of the poet by liberal thinkers showed the strength of Milton's position in the new movement and was a direct measure of his hold upon English life and thought. Johnson's strictures on Milton's character

as a man and politician "were as fire touched to the Romantic magazines...the explosion was immediate...."²⁶

The issue remained alive for the next fifty years, and occasional references to Johnson's injustice appeared throughout the nineteenth century. Most of the references dealt with the biography and stressed the most obvious instances of Johnson's political animosity. As a result, though interest in Milton as a man increased throughout this period, literary criticism of Milton's poetry took a secondary position. Except in the case of the major writers - Shelley, Hazlitt, and Coleridge - estimates of Milton's poetry followed the established trend of the late-eighteenth century. Little attempt was made to study Milton's poetry on aesthetic principles by periodical writers of this period. Criticism found in the biographies which followed Johnson's is for the most part mediocre and unoriginal. Johnson's adverse judgments of Milton's poetry were seldom evaluated in terms of literary merit, but for the most part were approached on ethical bases which brought in politics and religion as related issues. The most remarkable result of Johnson's Life of Milton was the controversial tone it gave to Milton criticism for the next half-century.

The most immediate extended defence of Milton was Archdeacon Francis Blackburne's anonymously published Remarks on Johnson's Life of Milton (1780). This work was expressly written to defend Milton against "the meanness...the virulent malignity" of Johnson and well displays the abusive

wrath heaped upon the head of the Tory biographer by political liberals. Blackburne explains Johnson's reasons for writing the Life as follows:

When the Doctor found, on some late occasions, that his crude abuse and malicious criticisms would not bring down Milton to the degree of contempt with the public which he had assigned him in the scale of prose writers; he fell upon an expedient which has sometimes succeeded in particular exigencies. In one word, he determined to write his life.²⁷

Blackburne infers that Johnson's part in the Lauder affair was motivated only by a strong desire to besmirch Milton's fame and that when this failed he found a new weapon for injuring his enemy in distorted biography and dishonest criticism. Edward Dowden attributes Blackburne's vehement defense of Milton to his own religious and political liberalism and connects Blackburne with other liberals and radicals like Thomas Hollis and William Godwin who championed Milton's prose works.²⁸ Blackburne included Areopagitica and the Tractate of Education in his Remarks since he felt that these works were not sufficiently well-known. According to Good, Blackburne came to be regarded as "a sort of national champion"²⁹ of Milton's honor against Johnson's biased attack. In his defence of Milton's political conduct, he eulogized the poet as a martyr to freedom. Blackburne based his case almost wholly on the prose works; he admittedly was not concerned with the poetry.

In 1789, Philip Neve published his Cursory Remarks on the English Poets. In the section devoted to Milton, he gives his exalted appreciation of Milton's poetic genius.

He describes Paradise Lost as "the greatest work of human genius" and asserts that Milton's genius was "above all example or comparison." "His subject, and his conduct of it, exalt him to a supreme rank...with which all other poets compare but as a second class."³⁰ Although only five pages are devoted to the Johnson controversy, Neve uses his heaviest artillery and sweepingly condemns the Tory biographer:

...prejudice, envy, nay, malignity, have, throughout this work, ever distinguished the candor of its author: in all cases determined his will against his subject, and in some missed his judgment.³¹

He infers that Johnson's unfavorable comments on the minor poems resulted from the Tory's hatred of the republican poet. Johnson, he says, was Milton's "avowed enemy."

Five years later, William Hayley's Life of John Milton with Conjectures on the Origin of Paradise Lost was received by Milton's admirers with high praise. This new biography by the amiable friend of Cowper marks one of the most determined attempts to present an interpretation of Milton which would brighten the grim, morose figure drawn by Johnson. Hayley states that his "great aim" is "to render full and perfect justice to the general character of Milton."³² In the dedication to Joseph Warton he refers to Dr. Johnson as "a very bitter, and sometimes, I think, an insidious enemy to the great poet." Hayley specifically tries to refute Johnson's charges of "austerity" and "unamiableness of temper." To do this, he illustrates Milton's character

almost entirely from the juvenile poems - especially the Latin and Italian poems - where he finds only the gentle emotions of kindness, filial and friendly affection, and gratitude. He especially stresses Milton's facility for making friends with amiable people to show that Milton himself possessed this trait. From the early poems, Hayley concludes that Milton possessed "great nobility of soul" and a prophetic knowledge of his own future performance of "great deeds."

Milton, adorned with every graceful endowment, highly and holily accomplished as he was, appears in the dark colouring of Johnson, a most unamiable being; but could he revisit the earth in his moral character, with a wish to retaliate, what a picture might be drawn by the sublime and offended genius of the great moralist who has treated him with such excess of asperity! 33

Hayley's interpretation and his unique method of achieving it appear to be based on the idea that a great poet must be a "good man" in the sense of one possessing the gentle virtues of kindness, sympathy, and mild disposition.

He excuses Milton's political conduct on the grounds that his "poetical cast of mind" sought only an ideal liberty; he was untouched by the baser political passions of his day. To Johnson's charge that Milton loved liberty less than he hated authority, Hayley replies: "No human spirit could be more sincerely a lover of just and beneficent authority, for no man delighted more in peace and order, no man has written more eloquently in their praise, or given sublimer proofs of his own personal attachment to them, by the

regulation of his own orderly and peaceful studies."³⁴

Hayley's biography is based on a principle of exclusion which attempts to support a pre-drawn conclusion - i.e., Milton was an amiable man - but the result, though interesting, is probably as inaccurate as Johnson's interpretation. It certainly illustrates the extremes to which Milton's defenders went "to redeem the man and save the poetry."

Charles Symmons, a professed Whig, published in 1806 a long, panegyric biography of Milton which stirred up the still smouldering coals of the Johnson controversy and presented a new interpretation of Milton's character from the Whig standpoint. Symmons's attack on Johnson bears all the signs of bitter political animosity; for moral aspersion and sweeping condemnation based only on inference it equals any of its predecessors. Johnson is likened to a "new Salmasius" whose "atrocious libel" rightfully blackened only his own character.³⁵ Symmons admits that Milton was well-defended by Blackburne and Hayley, but he adds that "a regard to the cause of morals and the best interests of man seems to justify that indignation which would brand, again and again, the hand lifted in violation of the illustrious dead." Obviously, writers with strong Whig sympathies were never tired of reviling Johnson.

Symmons's account of Milton's personal character and his political conduct attempts to answer, point by point, the strictures of Johnson. He interprets Milton as a cheerful, affable, graceful, and engaging man who had a "certain

dignity of mind" and a sense of "conscious superiority." He was grave, but he displayed no trace of melancholy. The poet was a good, affectionate husband and an injured father.

Regarding Milton's political opinions, he states that Milton's biographers have always thought it necessary to offer an apology. This, he asserts, is wholly unnecessary. Milton's republicanism sprang from a love of liberty associated with an ideal of the perfection of mankind. The evils of the Stuart reign showed him nothing but "insulted parliaments, arbitrary taxation, illegal and sanguinary tribunals, corrupted and mercenary law, bigotted and desolating persecution."³⁶ Who can blame him if he preferred a republic? In his relations with Cromwell he acted only as the servant of the people, and his actions were always consistent with this principle. Symmons's summary is a highpoint of Whig panegyric:

...we have now completed the history of John Milton; — a man in whom were industriously combined all the qualities that could adorn, or elevate the nature to which he belonged; a man, who at once possessed beauty of countenance, symmetry of form, elegance of manners, benevolence of temper, magnanimity of and loftiness of soul, the brightest illumination of intellect, knowledge the most various and extended, virtue that never loitered in her career nor deviated from her course; — a man, who, if he had been delegated as the representative of his species to one of the superior worlds, would have suggested a grand idea of the human race, as of beings affluent with moral and intellectual treasure, who were raised and distinguished in the universe as the favourites and heirs of Heaven.³⁷

Symmons's strictures on Johnson's criticism of the poetry are fully as vehement as his remarks on the biography. Thus

Johnson made Lycidas "the object of his perverse censure." His approval of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso was "formal and jejune," and he detracted, "as much as a sense of decency would permit him, from the merit of Comus..." His remarks on Samson Agonistes were severe. Even his "high and splendid panegyric" of Paradise Lost was completely cancelled by "a remark, which, on its admission, would at once lay the lofty edifice of praise in the dust, and by proving that this glorious epic was destitute of the first great requisite of poetry, the power of pleasing, would demonstrate it, with all its imputed excellences, to be an indifferent poem..."³⁸ Symmons also accuses Johnson of having participated in the Lauder affair only to "annihilate" Milton's fame, and this having failed, "the libellous biographer" published his Life of Milton to injure the poet's name.

Symmons's own literary criticism forms only a small part of his work, but it exhibits the same praise given to Milton's character. Comus, Lycidas, L'Allegro, and Il Penseroso are all judged as "exquisite productions" of his genius. In direct opposition to Johnson, Lycidas is called "an effusion of the purest and most exalted poetry."³⁹

Regarding all the minor poems, Symmons acknowledges that Milton's genius most obviously shows "elevation and power," but he could descend into "the regions of tenderness and grace, he can contract the action of his giant hands to the braiding of a wreath, or to the fashioning of a gem." This, too, attempts to refute Johnson.

Paradise Lost receives a somewhat detailed analysis. He calls the epic "the crowning exploit of his life." It "may be contemplated...as springing, like another Pallas, in a state of full maturity from the head of its mighty father..." The Whig biographer finds several blemishes in the poem, mainly "the ambitious attempt to give sensible action to the negative idea of spirit." But, he adds, to cite the defects of the "glorious work" would require little effort, while an enumeration of the "beauties" would occupy a volume.⁴⁰

Paradise Regained receives almost unqualified praise. Its style, admittedly of limited appeal, "results from the profundity of taste and the most refined artifice..." It is "the last happy effect of consummate and victorious art."⁴¹ Symmons's criticism of Samson Agonistes surprisingly enough agrees with Johnson's statement that the drama lacks a middle, but he concludes that it is a "manly, noble, and pathetic drama, the progeny of a mind equally exalted, sensitive and poetic." During the Restoration period, Milton had come to reflect on the "dishonorable violences of the government." Symmons uses biography in his interpretation of the drama when he asserts that "the impressions made on his mind by the sufferings of his party may be distinctly traced in some pathetic strains in the Samson Agonistes."⁴² This statement anticipates an increasing use of biographical material in the interpretation and criticism of Milton's poetry by later nineteenth century

critics.

One essential difference may be seen between the criticism of Johnson and that of Hayley and Symmons. Johnson separated the man and the poet by formulating a distinct personal character for the biography and a literary character for the criticism. The later biographers made no such distinction. In their hands, the personal and the literary characters merged into an idealized figure described in the highest panegyric. The poetry received the same tribute as the man and in identical terms.

To turn from the biographers to the leading periodicals of the period is to see at once that the interest in Milton was strong and active. The first review of Johnson's Life in the moderately-conservative Gentleman's Magazine justly states that the republican could expect little quarter from his Tory biographer.⁴³ Some of Johnson's harshest strictures are quoted to support this statement. The reviewer adds, however, that in spite of Johnson's censures on Milton's character, he was fair in giving due praise to the poetry. Johnson's dichotomy separating the man and the poet is followed in this review. Later in the same year, J. Boerhadem, a more incensed contributor, accused Johnson of "throwing the dirt of party" - a spectacle he found "painful to liberal minds."⁴⁴ His objections deal wholly with the biography, and he attempts to refute some of Johnson's biased charges.

Two years later in a review signed W. B., Johnson's

attack was attributed to "caprice and singularity."⁴⁵

Johnson viewed everything on the dark side; even poetry seemed uncongenial to him. The criticism of the minor poems, and especially that of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, elicits this remark:

Surely a fictitious Johnson is palmed upon me. Is it possible that the author of Irene should throw dirt with the hand of burlesque at the Penseroso, and even at that part of it which breathes the most exquisite simplicity?

The criticism of Paradise Lost shows that Johnson "discarded his partiality," however, and became himself.

In 1782, John Bowle, another contributor to the Gentleman's Magazine, submitted a lengthy vindication of "the character of a poet, who is an honour to our country..."⁴⁶ Bowle is concerned almost completely with the controversy regarding Milton's supposed corporal punishment at Cambridge, and he insists that Johnson inserted this blemish only to vent his spleen against the republican. "But Milton, notwithstanding the virulence of party, was an honest man, and in this persuasion," he states, "I am not singular." In the same issue, another contributor, "H", condemns Johnson's criticism of Lycidas,⁴⁷ but he states that most of his other judgments are just. Johnson's prejudices against pastoral poetry stem from "pedantry and old age," however, and should not be taken seriously; "the mention of an amorous nymph, a grove, and a dawn is sufficient to condemn the best poet in the world."

An anonymous contributor in 1786 censured Johnson for

thinking Milton unworthy "to be classed with heroes and
⁴⁸
 kings." He insists that the "immortal bard" has every
 right to such a place, and he submits a poetic apology for
 Milton:

Forgive th'intrusion, if a bard divine,
 Hostile to monarchs erst, your seats invade.
 Permit for once the cold and silent grave
 To quench your passions, and o'erwhelm your hate!

The epithets "immortal bard" and "divine Milton" were frequently applied to Milton by his defenders.

Ten years after the publication of Johnson's Life, a disturbed writer bemoaned the lack of "adequate defenses" of Milton from the "illiberal attacks" of Johnson.⁴⁹ He reveres Johnson, he says, aside from his "narrow party prejudices," but he regrets that his Guardian Angel did not wring the "black drop of party" from his heart when he was young.

...this malignant drop hath diffused its taint
 over several of his works: in the portrait of
 Milton...it spreads a baleful glare on those
 parts which candour would have shaded, while it
 obscures the brightest traits.

The writer states that Johnson was more eager to degrade Milton's character than to collect accurate information about his life. A Tory attitude towards Milton's political conduct appears when he says that if Johnson had not been prejudiced against Milton "he must have stricken his breast from pity and indignation to behold the immortal bard seized by the foul hag of faction, and his divine and delicate spirit compelled for years to act her earthy and abhorred commands." This attitude, which would remove the

divine poet from the republican prose writer is characteristic of the Tory approach to Milton throughout this period.

The strongest defence of Johnson appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1813.⁵⁰ The correspondent Vagus took Symmons to task for failing to present a "true and impartial character of his Hero." The practice of writing politically-biased biography is so common, he asserts, that it is a public service to protest against it. But it is towards Symmons's charge that Johnson treated Milton with malignity that the writer directs his arguments. Johnson's conduct was always distinguished by "integrity which he retained even against the severest penury." Johnson's character united the highest virtues: frankness, habitual piety, and undaunted spirit. These characteristics make him and his works, including his Life of Milton, impervious to any "railing accusations."

Although the Gentleman's Magazine published notices giving both sides to this controversial issue, other periodicals drew much sharper political lines. The next section will examine Milton criticism of periodicals showing strong Tory or Whig affiliations in order to determine the influence of politics on literary opinions. Here again the emphasis is on the biography since the attitude towards Milton as a man, as we have seen, often dictated the approach, at least, to his poetry. The British Critic and the Quarterly Review will exemplify the conservative Tory side, and the Monthly Review and the Edinburgh Review the

more liberal Whig viewpoint.

The publication of Johnson's Life placed the leading Tory periodicals in an unenviable critical position. The Tory critics were drawn at once in opposite directions - whether to follow loyally the great moralist in his prejudiced strictures on Milton's personal character or to repudiate Johnson's views and maintain allegiance to the popular eighteenth century view of Milton as a divine bard. The Tories attempted to solve the dilemma by facing Janus-like in both directions at once. That is, they agreed, though sometimes reluctantly, with the more violent Whig denunciations of Johnson's portrait while they stoutly defended their fellow Tory's character from the Whig attack. They admitted that Johnson's religious and political opinions colored his conception of Milton's character; they also conceded that his criticism of the minor poems was unjust. But these mistakes, they insisted, did nothing to tarnish Johnson's fame as the great defender of faith and morals, but stemmed from a common human frailty - culpability to error. They were especially ready to defend Johnson from such ardent Whigs as Symmons, and they were eager to give praise to writers like Hayley who handled Johnson more gently.

In their attitude towards Milton, the Tory reviewers consistently tried to play down his political activities. This, of course, was part of their plan to refute the conception of Milton as the great Whig. The Commonwealth

Period was ignored or adroitly circumvented in both their interpretations of Milton's character and their critical opinions of his poetry. In direct contrast to the Whigs, they never mentioned Milton's political life as exerting the least influence on his later poetry. Instead, they usually emphasized the earlier poems - the Latin poems, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Lycidas, and Comus - as exemplifying his "true" character. The obvious limitations of this method of understanding Milton were noted earlier in connection with Hayley, but the Tories apparently felt that they had succeeded in their purpose of "saving the man" since they followed the same critical policy for over fifty years. They managed to praise Milton's character - or their own unique interpretation of it - and his poetry without endorsing his political views. The portrait drawn by the British Critic and the Quarterly Review presents Milton as a lofty idealist and poetic genius, necessarily haughty and egotistical because of his inspired religious fervor and his rather un-earthly purity. This conception is somewhat similar to Johnson's literary character of the poet.

The British Critic reviewed Hayley's Life of Milton with warm praise based on outspoken political prejudices.⁵¹ This review offers an excellent example of the Tory attitude towards Milton at the end of the eighteenth century. The anonymous reviewer agrees with Hayley that it is "more fair to judge of his [Milton's] temper from those genuine effusions of his youthful feelings, than from his contro-

versial prose works, the offspring of irritation and polemic acrimony." The reviewer candidly admits that Johnson's Life was unjust and prejudiced, but he takes pains to insist that Johnson should not be "vilified and insulted." The main purport of the review is to reconcile Johnson and Milton by making allowance for error in each.

The attitude of the British Critic towards Milton's political activity foreshadows future Tory opinion for the next half-century. This approach consistently dismissed the political thought and conduct as unworthy and unnatural of the "true" Milton. Hence the reviewer seeks to find in the early poems and Paradise Lost the sublime poet:

From his poems have we taken our conceptions
of his soul, and from that impression we love
him; and though he might be soured by contest,
and the indulgence of prejudices, which lead to
harshness and asperity, we cannot possibly
believe him to have been by nature unamiable.⁵²

He agrees with Hayley that Milton was deceived by the "hypocrisy of Cromwell," but he carries the rationalization further with the theory that Milton's enthusiastic mind was easily blinded by its self-deceptive search for ideals. Milton's republicanism is excused because it was grounded in virtue; "nor do we deny that a man may be even now a republican virtuously, though, after examples of the present age, we think it difficult for any to be so wisely."

Thus Milton's fame as a poet was maintained by even the staunchest Royalists. When the chips were down, the Tories took Milton's side against Johnson, though the latter was vindicated from all charges of conscious malice. This

reviewer laments Johnson's unfavorable comments on Lycidas and describes them as "unfeeling" and "totally unworthy of him." The biographical element is of first importance in this criticism, not only for the complete omission of the Commonwealth Period, but because Milton's character was wholly exemplified by the happier, more felicitous passages from his poems.

Occasionally writers for the British Critic appear baffled by the incongruity they found between Milton's political conduct and his poetic achievements. The great distance between the noble poet and the bitter controversialist appears to some writers irreconcilable. This results perhaps from their attempt to fit Milton into a preconceived idealized stereotype of what a great poet should be rather than to consider all the evidence to determine what he actually was. The conflict was based on the contrast between Milton's prose and his poetry. In an 1810 review of Scott's edition of Dryden, a writer notes that "it seldom occurs that those minds which are so constituted as to exult in the degradation of the great, and to treat those with scorn whom faction and fortune have joined to depress, are susceptible of those impressions which constitute the poet..."⁵³ The reviewer adds that Milton must be considered an exception to this idea, but "his political and poetical life are strangely at variance with each other."

In prose, this great effort was to justify rebellion and regicide, to make treason virtue, and usurpation honourable. In his immortal poem he sings the sin and folly of rebellion, the miserable consequences

of disobedience, and the punishment and contempt into which impenitent traitors and hardened rebels must inevitably fall...'⁵⁴

The problem presented by this dichotomy resulted in the frequent Tory practice of ignoring whenever possible Milton's politics or of attributing his actions to unavoidable circumstances.

The literary criticism of the British Critic primarily centers on Milton's minor poems with many scattered references to passages in Paradise Lost. Cowper's translation of Milton's Latin and Italian poems (1808) elicited its most extended criticism of the poetry.⁵⁵ The reviewer's comments are remarkably consistent in tone. The early poems are praised as "the first fruits of his genius, the manifest and very extraordinary promise of his future eminence." The "qualities of the man" revealed in these poems are listed at length: "the generous and affectionate attachment to friends, tender gratitude to a worthy preceptor, the truly filial piety and attachment to a good father, and lastly the high sentiments of honour, propriety, virtue, and religion, which everywhere pervade these very juvenile, give altogether a very singular picture of native excellence..." The reviewer then adds that the "beautiful sentiments" of these early poems forces him to agree with Symmons that throughout Milton's life his intentions were honorable, "though circumstances led him into efforts which we disapprove." In this review the writer notes that Milton's Italian poems reveal the lofty poet in love - "but always

like himself, dignified, moral, and pious."

Charles, and I say it wond'ring, thou must know,
That I, who once assumed a scornful air,
And scoff'd at Love, am fallen in his snare,
Full many an upright man has fallen so.

From these lines the reviewer concludes that Milton was inclined "to all the virtuous effects of the tender passion"; but his persistent loftiness prevented him from admitting it to himself.

The efforts of the Tory periodicals to play down Milton's politics is seen most clearly in their violent anti-Whig feelings. In 1815 William Godwin published his Lives of Edward and John Philips. The British Critic used the harshest invective in its review of this work.⁵⁶ Godwin's writings are called obscene, his political ideas repugnant. The chief criticism, however, comes from the charge that Godwin tries to identify Milton with his own republican cause. This the Tories would never permit; their arguments follow the same lines noted above:

The name of Milton, never pronounced without the reverence due to superior talents employed to vindicate the ways of God to man, is here obtruded on us, for the sole purpose of reconciling us to regicide, and of traducing our national constitution.⁵⁷

The reviewer is incensed that Godwin should recall the fact that Milton "voluntarily quitted the service of the Muses, and profaned his genius by views and fierce controversy." Paradise Lost is praised as a masterpiece that will live forever, the standard of excellence for the noblest poetry. And it is on the basis of this achievement, together with

the early poems, that Milton's sanctified memory will rest. The Commonwealth Period is an ugly blemish on Milton's life to be kept permanently under cover. "Beyond all comparison the most interesting and only pleasing part of the History of Milton's Life is that which precedes the commencement of the civil wars in England..." The writer concludes with the assurance that when the authority of Milton is brought to bear against the government and the established church, the British Critic will "render good service" by exposing such threats to stability.

The attempts of this periodical to reconcile the disparate conceptions of Milton the politician with the divine poet appear in an article in 1819.⁵⁸ Milton is called "no friend of the Church of England, or of Monarchy." The point is stressed, however, that the poet's enmity to the established institutions was based on honest principles. His independent mind was opposed to the "mean cupidity and unprincipled selfishness" of his faction.

In 1822 a reviewer of Byron's dramas tried to extricate Milton's Satan from a comparison with Byron's Lucifer.⁵⁹ Paradise Lost is venerated second only to the Bible for purity of thought and expression. To compare it to "this outlawed pamphlet of blasphemy" (i.e., Cain) is taken as direct proof of the neglect of Milton's works at this time. The character of Satan receives close analysis in order to show that he is not a blasphemous creation like Lucifer. Finally, the mere attempt to make such a comparison is

dismissed as a folly which "militates most directly against the very design and fondest wish of Milton's own heart."

The reviewer cites Milton's purpose

...to assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men,

and adds:

We challenge, in return, the production of a single passage, from the first line to the last of Paradise Lost, which will excite in the mind of any reasonable creature the most transient feeling of profaneness.⁶⁰

Byron is subsequently held up as the symbol of "bigotry, blasphemy, and baseness," while Milton is exalted as the great example of a truly religious poet. This exemplifies another important Tory attitude towards Milton inherited from the eighteenth century.

Over fifty years after the publication of Johnson's Life, the great Tory's Milton criticism was still a significant and interesting topic to this periodical. In a review of Mitford's Life (1832), the writer reprimands Johnson for having "permitted the bitterness of political animosity to deaden the feeling of the noble and beautiful."⁶¹ He refers to Johnson's strictures on the minor poems. By far the most outspoken reprimand of Johnson by this Tory periodical is the statement that he was "so blinded by prejudice that he could not see." But this is ameliorated by the remark that he had a "practical mind" and little imagination.

The writer's statements on Symmons reveal the still deeply engrained Tory slant. Symmons, "a champion willing

and ardent to avenge the puritan upon his enemy Johnson," receives treatment only slightly less abusive than Godwin. The writer says that he displays much more political partisanship than Johnson. "He descants upon Milton's love of liberty with the tone and energy of the great unwashed haranguing the ten thousand of the Birmingham democracy." Especially irritating to this reviewer is Symmons's statement that Paradise Lost would have been a far less beautiful poem if Milton had been a Tory. He answers this by asserting that Milton's lofty spirit was above the tumult of party politics. He was a visionary in religion and politics and on that account is excused for his dangerous beliefs on these subjects:

It has been the fate of Milton, in common with many other illustrious men, to have his name and principles used to sanction crime and rebellion. The republicanism of Milton is the republicanism of a poet. His political life was a pilgrimage to a purer and more ennobled state of being, to which the phantom light of a warm and enthusiastic temperament led him on.⁶²

To the Tories, therefore, Milton's errors were those of judgment, not of intention. Though he was blinded by prejudices, he was an honest lover of truth - deeply imbued "with the spirit of the Hebrew world." The veneration given him always rests on his sublimity as a poet and his piety as a man. The Tories kept alive the eighteenth century conception of Milton as the divine bard.

The great nineteenth century Tory organ, the Quarterly Review, formulated a critical approach to Milton similar to that of the British Critic. One essential difference,

however, is that the Quarterly devoted more attention to Milton's poetry, and its notices may be more properly called literary criticism. In 1825, an anonymous writer criticized Paradise Lost from the standpoint of what he called Milton's great personal error, intellectual pride, and the great fault of the Puritan sect, spiritual pride.⁶³ The writer contends that these two defects probably account for the "main faults in Milton's poetry." Thus, "a studious undervaluing of the female character" is distinctly seen by comparing Milton's Eve with the Lady in Comus. He states that the character of the Lady was conceived before Milton's mind had become "so deeply tainted" with the fault of intellectual pride. He supports this idea by citing Eve's unwillingness or her apparent unworthiness to speak with Raphael after the dinner in Paradise.

...Such pleasure she reserved,
Adam relating, she sole auditress.

He says that the "sentiment may be natural enough, since the primeval curse upon women: but does it not argue too strong a sense of her original inferiority, to put it into her mind before the fall?"

Another fault that this reviewer attributes to Milton's intellectual pride and the spiritual pride of his religious sect is the insulting tone with which the good angels address the fallen angels in Paradise Lost. He speculates that the "too attractive colors," in which, perhaps unconsciously, Milton describes Satan stems from the same causes.

It is a well-known complaint among many of the readers of Paradise Lost, that they can hardly keep themselves from sympathizing, in some sort, with Satan, as the hero of the poem. The most probable account of which surely is, that the author himself partook largely of the haughty and vindictive republican spirit, which he has assigned to the character, and consequently, though perhaps unconsciously, drew the portrait with a peculiar zest.⁶⁴

Then, after deprecating Milton's character of Satan and tracing the faults directly to the poet's political beliefs and his personal character, the Tory reviewer brings a heavier charge. He states that Milton has materialized spiritual conceptions in his descriptions of Heaven and Paradise. Milton, "with very little selection or refinement" brings to Heaven the imagery of Paradise and Earth. This results in a lack of spirituality and purity, and the writer feels that Milton must have been aware of something unsatisfactory in this. He concludes that the poet inserted an apology into Raphael's mouth:

Though what if earth
Be but the shadow of heav'n, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?

This blemish in the poem cannot even be partly attributed to the times in which Milton lived; the blame must rest wholly on the poet's character. The reviewer concludes by almost being "led to wish" that Milton had chosen a subject for his epic further removed from religion. Evidently Milton's intellectual pride as reflected in his politics and the spiritual pride of the Puritans almost rendered him unsuitable for his sacred subject.

Like most of the leading periodicals of the day, the

Quarterly Review devoted a complete article to Milton's De Doctrina Christiana in the same year in which it was translated and published (1825).⁶⁵ The reviewer considers the main ideas in the treatise, but much of the article is given to an account of Milton's character and its relation to the poetry. The conception formed by this writer of Milton as a man agrees in many respects with the views of the British Critic. Milton is depicted as a lofty and solitary idealist, the writer of immortal poetry, who unfortunately degraded his genius during Cromwell's reign. The Tory viewpoint is evident in the deemphasis of Milton's political life and the stress placed on the poetic career. He describes the poet as retreating "to the serene and majestic sanctuary of his own intellect" after the Restoration...girding up all his mental energies...solemnly devoting and setting himself apart for the accomplishment of his three great meditated works..."

However, the reviewer cannot help stating that Milton's "old passions" (i.e., his republican sympathies) cropped up occasionally in his solitary retirement and forced their way into his poetry. But he adds that "it is impossible not to admire the severity with which he seems to repress his nature, and the earnest dignity with which he endeavors to seclude himself from these eternal enemies." For instance, the Limbo of Fools represents Milton's attempt to rid himself of his old prejudices so that they will not contaminate his imaginative descriptions of Heaven and Paradise. But

this writer, too, sees in the character of Eve a direct expression of Milton's stern notions of the female sex, his idea of woman's inferiority and her rightful subordination to masculine dominance:

...O why did God,
 Creator wise, that peopled highest Heaven
 With spirits masculine, create, at last,
 This novelty on earth, this fair defect
 Of nature, and not fill the earth at once
 With men, as angels, without feminine!

He cites this passage as one of the "more singular tenets which incorporated themselves with his moral being." Thus, as with a regretful shake of the head, the Tory writer admits that even Milton was not able to exclude "his rooted prejudices" from his poetry. His conclusion, however, echoes the familiar Tory strain: We should remember Milton for his magnificent poetry (in spite of its faults); we should push his controversial works and the memory of his violent political animosities into "comparative obscurity"; and we should pay particular attention to the early poems which reflect the man in his unblemished youth.

Two years later, J. J. Blunt reviewed Todd's edition of Milton's poetry and attempted to refute Macaulay's interpretation of Milton as the ideal embodiment of the great Whig.⁶⁶ Blunt carries the dichotomy of Milton as a man and as a poet as far as any previous writer. He interprets Milton as a "Puritan in his least offensive form."

In him we now possess, filled up with all the accuracy of detail, a magnificent specimen of the Puritan in his least offensive form; the fervour, the devotion, the honest indignation, the moral fearlessness, the uncompromising

impetuosity, the fantastic imagination of his party, all conspicuous; unalloyed, however, by the hypocrisy, the vulgarity, the cant, the cunning, and bad taste, which have so generally made the name [of Puritan] to stink in the nostrils of men.⁶⁷

Much of Blunt's article treats of the Puritan character, and while he admits that some of Milton's contemporaries may have acted in good conscience - "the same may be said of the inmates of Bedlam." The few good points granted are consistently negated by insulting juxtapositions and withering epithets. To remove Milton from this highly undesirable company while still retaining him as the arch-Puritan is Blunt's avowed purpose. His method is at once evident: Milton as a poet is to receive the most reverent homage, but as a divine or a statesman he is to be regarded only as an impractical visionary. To place more importance on his merits in the latter positions "is to come forward with hymns and cymbals to adore the mighty luminary when he is suffering an eclipse." Such veiled allusions to Macaulay's panegyric on Milton as a statesman are fairly frequent in the essay. Blunt dwells at length on Milton's visionary character. He interprets his religious views as inconsistent, his government theories as wholly impractical, and asserts that Milton had no influence on his age in any religious or political matters. "A man who was thus all his life dwelling in the third heaven, was not the material out of which Cromwell could fashion an adviser..." Milton was an idealist who would listen to no advice, brook no opposition, and accept no compromise on his views.

Blunt's portrait of Milton as a Puritan visionary comes very close to the more usual Tory stereotype of a solitary and haughty genius who understood nothing of the practical side of life. "Persecution, to a man of Milton's spirit, would have been a mercy; toleration and neglect he could not endure, nor forgive. In the querulous address to Heaven of his Samson, we may recognize the language of the mortified politician:"

He led me on to mightiest deeds,
Above the nerve of mortal arm,
Against the uncircumcised, our enemies,
But now hath cast me off, as never known.

Turning to Milton in a "new character," Blunt asserts that "the same quality of mind which made his politics worthless, gave to his poetry his superlative charm." This statement might be called a pivotal key to Tory criticism in this period. Milton's lack of judgment and common-sense resulted from an excess of imagination, and the latter quality produced the most "unearthly" poetry ever written. In an attempt to vindicate "Milton's better feelings," Blunt comes forth with the following conclusion:

The mind of Milton was perfect fairy-land; and every thought which entered it, whether grave or gay, magnificent or mean, quickly partook of a fairy form.⁶⁹

Thus in his attempt to convince his readers of Milton's visionary nature, Blunt declares that the poet's usual state of mind was romantic; he thought in terms of romance; the daily acts of his life were translated into romance. Blunt's article represents the high point of the Tories' attempt

to form a character for Milton compatible with their own political views.

The Monthly Review became one of Milton's earliest and staunchest defenders against his political enemies almost from the first year of its publication (1749) and retained its holy allegiance until it ceased activity (1845). An analysis of its more important articles concerning Milton in this period reveals a unified approach which without oversimplification can be summed up in one word: panegyric. It became an established editorial policy of this liberal periodical to regard Milton as the perfect embodiment of ardent patriotism, intellectual genius, and sublime poetic achievement.

The popular Whig approach to Milton is immediately apparent in the reception of Johnson's Life. This periodical took up the defense of Milton's personal character with the zeal of a religious fanatic against what it considered a planned and vicious attack.⁷⁰ Not only did the liberal Monthly seek to vindicate the "injured bard" in its immediate review of the controversial biography, but it continued to⁷¹ make pointed attacks on Johnson for the next fifty years. A strong party feeling motivates its consistent approach to Milton's character and his poetry. In the review of Blackburne's Remarks on Johnson's Life of Milton, the reviewer states that "charity" makes him hope that Johnson's share in the "dirty business" of the Lauder case was not great, but he agrees with Blackburne that Milton was "insidiously

attacked by a masked battery" directed at his moral character.⁷²
 One of Blackburne's purposes was to repudiate Johnson's aspersions on the poet's relations with Cromwell. The reviewer declares that he accomplishes his purpose, and attributes his motives to "a generous concern for the reputation of an injured individual and...a truly patriotic regard for the general liberties of mankind." Thus Johnson's Life of Milton is interpreted as a direct attack on the Whig idea of liberty, and Milton emerges as the great defender of individual freedom.⁷³

Fifteen years later, the Monthly Review received Hayley's Life as another tribute to the "immortal man who was the glory of his age and country."⁷⁴ Although the opinions of the Whig reviewer differ greatly from his Tory counterparts regarding Hayley's unique biographical method, the new Life was received joyfully by "those who cherish with peculiar regard the remembrance of Milton as a patriot, as well as a poet...in the prospect of his recovering, from the justice of a biographer congenial with him in manly and liberal sentiments, that moral lustre of character which it was so manifestly the aim of his last prejudiced, though able, biographer to sully and obscure." The writer wholly agrees with Hayley that Milton should be regarded as a model of superior virtue and an unrivalled genius.

The points on which this reviewer finds fault with Hayley's biography are significant in determining the general critical attitude of the Whigs towards the poet in

this period. In the first place, he does not agree with Hayley's interpretation of Milton as a genial and benignant man as seen in his early poems. The criticism on this point is astute and penetrating and does credit to the reviewer. The fact that Hayley tries to refute Johnson's views receives praise, but his method shows "overstrained comments, far-fetched suppositions, and amplification of trivial circumstances." This Whig writer prefers to interpret Milton as a man of naturally stern disposition, for he finds this character more consistent with "the serious, the learned, the lofty, the sublime Milton, the severe disciplinarian, the zealous champion...." Why, the writer asks, should the author of Paradise Lost be the most amiable of men? Hayley's interpretation is improbable; Milton's "bold and prominent features are almost lost beneath this delicate varnish." This view of Milton is, of course, a direct contradiction to the popular Tory interpretation of the poet's character. The Whig attitude appears clearly in the following statement:

With respect to the side which Milton took during the troubles of his country, all apology must be either unnecessary or useless. They who detest him as a rebel to his king, and they who revere him as the champion of liberty, will continue to feel as they have begun, unless their own political opinions alter. The charge of deserting his principles, however, and of flattering an usurper, certainly requires a refutation from those who would vindicate his moral excellence.⁷⁵

The Monthly Review found Milton's zealous Whig biographer Symmons "peculiarly calculated" to relate the republican poet's life. ⁷⁶ Symmons is described as "boldly standing forwards to repel the shafts of party-malice and

detraction...." The reviewer gives Johnson and his Tory predecessors the following outburst:

Every measure, which the ingenuity of narrow-minded hostility could invent, has been employed to undermine his character; and prejudice has feasted with delight on the slanders and insinuations, which, in the shape of history, biography, and criticism, have been levelled against this our distinguished countryman: but, as truth always gains strength and glory from the contests which error imprudently provokes, so men of great and virtuous minds rise ultimately in the regard and estimation of the world, in consequence of the mean attempts of time-serving detractors.⁷⁷

Hume, Warton, and Johnson are named by the reviewer as critics who looked on Milton's "stern republicanism" with "eyes askance." Symmons, on the other hand, "enamoured of the principles of civil and religious liberty, which are interwoven with and constitute the golden threads of the British Constitution," becomes Milton's biographer con amore. The reviewer's main purpose is to vindicate Milton's relations with Cromwell. He accepts whole-heartedly Symmons's statement that Milton's ideas on freedom stemmed from a feeling of natural benevolence to his fellow men and a great sense of duty to God. Milton never forsook his high principles or bowed the knee to Cromwell.

Two years later, Johnson was again brought into focus as "the virulent attacker of the fair fame of our illustrious poet," and again the motive is laid to "party-spleen!"⁷⁸ In this review of Cowper's translation of the early poems, Milton's juvenilia are praised as the "productions of vigorous thought, expressed in nervous and commanding

language, as are scarcely excelled by the most finished thought of *Paradise Lost* itself." Significantly, the most distinguishing quality of Milton's Latin poems are their "extraordinary freedom." The style and thought both show the decisive character of the author in being entirely his own, but this quality is not surprising when found in the "prince of English poetry."

In the following years, the Monthly Review continued its championship of Milton with increasing fervor. Rather than let Johnson's strictures slip into oblivion, this Whig periodical continued to "brand, again and again," Milton's Tory detractor. In an article on William Godwin's biography of Milton's nephews in 1815, the nineteenth century radical gains great esteem for his outspoken defence of Milton's character and his political principles: the reviewer dismisses the material on Edward and John Phillips as dull and uninteresting. (Both were Royalist sympathizers).

An article on Milton's Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce in 1820 shows well the allowances that this periodical was willing to make towards Milton.⁷⁹ The Monthly Review vigorously disapproves of the arguments in the divorce treatise, but it states: "This is, however, the doctrine of Milton; and all that appears under the shelter of such a name, and the sanction of such an authority, is privileged from contempt."

Most of the Monthly Review notices emphasize Milton's career during the Commonwealth Period and stress his role

as a great patriot. This evidently resulted from the periodical's political affiliations and its consistent attempts to negate Johnson's statements on Milton's political character. However, the conception of Milton as a plain citizen was often presented, and it is intimately related to the portrait of the champion of liberty. It was pointed out above that the Monthly did not accept Hayley's interpretation of Milton as an amiable and agreeable man; nor did it consider the Tory interpretation of a great but wholly impractical visionary. Instead, it viewed him as a lofty and stern republican imbued with great spirit and eloquence in his defence of political and personal freedoms. The Whig Milton emerges as a dynamic genius with both feet on the ground who used his talents to admonish Cromwell not to abuse his political authority:

Let no one suppose that Milton forfeited the independence of his own mind by transferring his services from a republican parliament to an autocrat: no - he was the unavailing Mentor, bravely pleading for the liberties of his country, and endeavoring to subdue in Cromwell's mind the lust of empire.⁸⁰

A good description which stresses Milton's personal characteristics appears in a review of Mrs. Felicia Hemans's Loves of the Poets (1829).⁸¹ The author of this little book presents Milton as a romantic lover with evidence drawn from the poetry and the early biographies. The reviewer denies this conception, preferring to retain the picture of Milton as a stern authoritarian more concerned with his great pursuits in politics than romance.

In 1824 the publication of Hayley's Memoirs gave the Monthly an opportunity to review his Life of Milton again, and the usual references to the "Philistine Johnson" followed:

Milton was a republican, and Johnson indulged an inveterate hatred towards everything allied to republicanism. With malicious perversity, therefore, he labored to tarnish the lustre of his reputation; lending a greedy ear to any tale which could bring his virtues into suspicion....⁸²

Thus, forty-five years after the publication of Johnson's Life the Whigs "would not willingly let die" this bitter controversy. Todd's Life of Milton (1826) prompted a long review of Milton's life with the usual emphasis on the political career, and the anonymous writer prefaced his remarks on Todd with the charge that "the bitter hatred which Johnson bore to the personal character and political conduct of the Republican has...wholly lost its sting...."⁸³ The reviewer states that Milton is now to be regarded by everyone as a great genius devoted to the pursuit of truth. "It is in this spirit that the world, and more especially his own countrymen are now willing to receive every new illustration of Milton's life and character."

While it is by now apparent that the Monthly Review was much more interested in Milton's political life and his personal character than in his poetry, another article in 1826 gives more than the usual praise to Paradise Lost and seeks to find in the poem elements of Milton's life and environment during the Commonwealth Period.⁸⁴ Recalling the "grave pomp of the guard chamber, the stern grandeur

and solemn courage of those iron troops of the Protectorate," the reviewer conjectures that these familiar sights were not lost on Milton when he described the warring angels. In discussing Cromwell, the figure of Satan recalls "the great usurper of the English throne." Cromwell, after his cause was lost and his ambition blasted, "may have largely administered to those splendid and saddened contemplations that make the picture of majesty in *Paradise Lost*. The faded cheek, the clouded brow, the mind loaded with the care of a mighty monarchy, the shape not altogether shorn of its original brightness, the daring and settled spirit, yet not insensible to touches of sudden feeling, 'tears such as angels shed,' bring us back powerfully to the great usurper of the English throne." ⁸⁵ The reviewer carefully adds, however, that Milton, feeling a "republican homage" for Cromwell's fine qualities of statesmanship and military leadership, would never have depicted him as bearing any "evil similitude" to the fallen angel. But the fact that *Paradise Lost* was written at a period when Cromwell's cause was lost and only "magnificent despair" remained is the strongest evidence to this reviewer that Milton based his great character of Satan on the English dictator. Only an avid Whig writer would have dared to make such a conjecture at this time.

The great Whig organ of the nineteenth century was the *Edinburgh Review*. To this periodical as to the *Monthly Review* the name of Milton signified two things: devout

patriotism based on solid republican principles and sublime poetry inspired by religious fervor. The Edinburgh Review was the natural beneficiary suited by political and literary policies to carry on the idolatrous concept of Milton as the great Whig. This policy reached its climax in Macaulay's essay (1825), though the attitude persisted well into the century.

That the critical approach of the Edinburgh was based firmly on the biography is easily seen by an examination of its references to the poet. In 1806, a review of De Lille's translation of Paradise Lost afforded the anonymous reviewer an opportunity to set the editorial slant towards the poet while venting a full measure of sarcasm on his French translator and the French nation in general.⁸⁶ The tone of the article appears in such statements as "...how could he expect to soar on the sublime pinions of our Milton?"⁸⁷ The possessive pronoun is significant, connoting not only national pride but Whig proprietorship as well. Milton's personal characteristics of chastity, purity, austerity, and religious zeal, the writer says, are reflected throughout Paradise Lost, and this renders it extremely unlikely that a French writer could begin to do justice to his great task. Milton's "chaste correctness" of taste endow his characterizations of Adam and Eve with a true innocence; in his descriptions of Eve never does he allow "his imagination to be led astray by the romantic ideals that prevail among the writers of the age of chivalry, or the more voluptuous descriptions

that are to be met with in the great poets of the ancient world." De Lille, on the other hand, makes Adam and Eve "hand one another up and down the Garden of Eden after the fashion of two sprightly lovers promenading in the Champs Elysses. Their speeches are frequently followed by amorous pauses...." This sacrilege is totally unlike the spirit of Milton's epic, "inspired as his genius was with the sublimity of the prophetic writings."

In the same year in a review of Knight's Inquiry into the Principle of Taste, the writer timidly puts forth several strictures on Milton's poetic style. ⁸⁸ The most important deals with "the irregularity of his pauses" which, he says, gives the character of prose to his verse and "deprives it of all fire and enthusiasm." But this fault is attributed to his "verse" rather than to his "mind." (The reviewer does not explain this dichotomy). He finds a "want of that charm and ease" in Milton's later poems which he sees in the poetry of Homer and Virgil. The defect is then explained as a natural result of the "evil days upon which he had fallen" and the habitually severe and serious state of his temperament. The writer agrees with Johnson that there are always touches of melancholy in his poetry which reach an "unblending solemnity" in Paradise Lost. The impression of this great severity derived from Milton's austere character "is apt to leave an impression almost painful to the mind."

In an 1815 review of Godwin's Lives of Edward and John Philips, the writer refers mockingly to Johnson's portrait

of Milton as a "morose tyrant."⁸⁹ In discussing Milton's genealogy he states:

We profess that superstitious veneration for the memory of that greatest of poets, which regards the slightest relique of him as sacred; and we cannot conceive either true poetical sensibility, or a just sense of the glory of England, to belong to that Englishman, who would not feel the strongest emotion at the sight of a descendant of Milton, discovered in the person even of the most humble and unlettered of human beings.⁹⁰

He admits that Johnson gave "noble tribute" to the poet, but the Tory biographer "made satisfaction to his hatred by a virulent libel on the man." Thus a veneration of Milton bears a direct connection to the patriotic love of England according to this Whig writer. He feels that it is excellent that Godwin should feel the same about the events and men of Milton's age as Milton himself felt, for the great poet's biography should only be attempted by a writer in full sympathy with his principles of liberty. Symmons and Hayley receive due commendation.

The reviewer then offers his definition of English political party members: "The precise difference between a moderate Tory and a moderate Whig is, we conceive, this — That a Tory is more influenced by loyalty, and a Whig by the love of liberty — that a Tory considers liberty as the second interest of society, while a Whig considers it as the first...." On this basis Milton was venerated as the great Whig.

Thomas Campbell's Specimens of the British Poets (1819) was quoted at length by its reviewer to illustrate some of

Milton's "most splendid passages."⁹¹ Campbell's comments were "offerings not unworthy of the shrine," and he rightfully approached his subject with awe and trepidation:

There is something that overawes the mind in conceiving his long deliberated selection of that theme - his attempting it when his eyes were shut upon the face of nature - his dependence we might almost say, on supernatural inspiration....⁹²

To this reviewer Milton is the lonely bard of immortal subjects looking down on the Restoration Period somewhat like a haughty god. "The very choice of his subject bespoke a contempt for any species of excellence attainable by other men."

Francis Jeffrey, editor of the Edinburgh Review during this period, mentioned Milton briefly in his article on English tragedy.⁹³ His remarks are almost identical with those of Coleridge and Hazlitt in denying Milton any dramatic faculty. Milton, he says, speaks throughout Comus, Paradise Lost, and Samson Agonistes. His great spirit "shone through the story, whatever it might be; and whatever the character, his own arguments and his own opinions were brought out and arranged in lucid order." This type of biographical criticism in which Milton's great spirit and strong personality are seen in his poetry became more frequent in the later years of the nineteenth century.

Four months before Macaulay's essay appeared in the Edinburgh, the Whig idolatrous attitude reached an anticipatory climax.⁹⁴ An anonymous writer treated Paradise Lost and its author with the most exalted terms of praise in the

language:

We prostrate ourselves before him, alternately in fear and love; while he lets loose the statures of Hell upon us, or unbars the blazing doors of Heaven, or carries us 'winding through the marble air,' past Libra and the Pole, or laps us in a dream of Paradise, and unfolds the florid richness of his Arcadian landscape.

He describes Milton's genius as daring and great; the poet stands forth as the exemplar of sublimity and beauty. The peculiar characteristics seen in the man and his poetry are "a breadth of character and a towering spirit, which stood over his subject and pervaded it from beginning to end...."

The famous essay which brought immediate acclaim to its author and exerted incalculable popular influence, Macaulay's review of De Doctrina Christiana,⁹⁵ appropriately concludes this section on Whig criticism. Actually the essay is less a review of Milton's religious treatise than a fervent tribute to the poet's personal character and an impassioned defence of Milton's political conduct. That his purpose is multiple appears in Macaulay's statement that he would "commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and martyr of English liberty." Though this statement establishes the tone for most of the essay as Macaulay justifies Milton's public conduct during the Revolution, vindicates his relations with Cromwell, pays reverential respect to his poetry and prose, and exalts his character

as an individual, the Whig writer finds opportunity to condemn the Tories on political and literary matters from the Restoration to 1825. No author in this period displays so well the Whig attitude towards Milton: all the ingredients are in this essay. Macaulay has gathered up, as it were, all the elements which collectively reproduced the stereotype of Milton as the great Whig. Certainly no other writer expounded his views in such a brilliant outburst of rhetorical panegyric.

Since Macaulay's literary criticism is based on his unqualified admiration of Milton's character, it may be well to consider first his overall approach to the poet. It is difficult to paraphrase or summarize the exalted terms which convey Macaulay's tribute, but the above quotation may serve as a good starting point. Each of these conceptions of Milton - statesman, private citizen, and poet - is expanded and developed. That the author's political sympathies are a motivating factor behind his approach seems obvious from the open attacks on Milton's (and Macaulay's) political opponents beginning with Charles I. The old Whig-Tory controversy over Milton's character and political principles, quite apart from his merit as a poet, appears to dictate Macaulay's position. He clearly recognizes the political animosity to Milton still active and voluble. His vindication of the poet's conduct during the Revolution and Commonwealth periods leads immediately into an examination and justification of the Great Rebellion, on Whig terms, since

the "public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned, according as the resistance of the people to Charles I shall appear to be justifiable or criminal."⁹⁶ By developing an analogy between the Great Rebellion and the Glorious Revolution, Macaulay asserts that the former was absolutely necessary to the freedom of the English people. Charles I receives heavy blame as an untrustworthy tyrant, while the "rulers in the church and state reaped only what they had sown." Milton receives great praise because he stood firmly by the cause of liberty. He was one of those "wise and good men" who indulged in "none of the ridiculous excesses of their associates." "His public conduct was such as was to be expected from a man of a spirit so high, and an intellect so powerful...." The problem of reconciling Milton, as the voice of liberty, with Cromwell, a "military usurper," is solved with the statement that Milton's choice lay between Cromwell and the Stuarts. Milton emerges unscathed from the political discussion as the devoted literary champion of liberty and reason in an age when despotism and prejudice were formidable enemies. He united the best qualities of the Cavalier and the Puritan.

To turn now to the literary criticism, actually secondary to the political part of the essay, the biographical basis is soon evident. Macaulay makes a statement unique in this period when he asserts the fallacy of inferring the personal character of a writer directly from passages in his works. He adds, however, that there is no danger in doing this with

any of Milton's works. Besides Dante, Macaulay knows of no writer whose works were more influenced by his "moral qualities" than Milton. Thus all of Milton's great characteristics described reverently throughout the essay - moral fortitude, strength and grandeur of imagination, lofty thought - are directly perceived on every page of his prose and poetry. Though Milton the man is most clearly revealed in the very personal passages, his mind stamped every line with the unmistakable mark of his omnipresent personality.

In spite of the fact that personality figures so largely in the works, Macaulay insists that Milton was not an egoist. He did not bring his idiosyncracies into his works; he shares nothing in common with "those modern beggars for fame, who extort a pittance from the compassion of the inexperienced, by exposing the nakedness and sores of their minds." Continuing his comparison of Milton and Dante, he says that their works were "completely, though undesignedly, coloured by their personal feelings."

All of Milton's poems receive unqualified praise from Macaulay except Samson Agonistes. The strictures on Milton's drama result from the biographical basis of the criticism. The main defect is found to be a conflict between the lyric and dramatic elements. According to Macaulay, Milton's chief province lay in the lyric expression of his personal feelings. He could not fulfill the duties of a dramatist who must keep himself out of sight at all times. Since Milton's personality expressed itself directly in his

writings, a conflict between his natural lyric expression and his attempted dramatic method resulted. "The conflicting ingredients, like an acid and an alkali mixed, neutralize each other."⁹⁷ For this reason Samson is Milton's least successful effort. On the other hand, Comus is a lyrical triumph because Milton does not try to make himself follow the outlines of the drama. "The speeches must be read as majestic soliloquies...the finest passages are those which are lyric in form as well as in spirit." When Milton was free of the "shackles of the dialogue" he could fully express his "choral raptures."

Then like his own Good Genius bursting from the earthly form and weeds of Thyrsis, he stands forth in celestial freedom and beauty....⁹⁸

Although Macaulay finds Milton in all of his works, he sees him most clearly in the sonnets. "They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been." Macaulay's prime interest in the biography appears in his opinion of the sonnets; he finds them distinguished by an unparalleled "sobriety and greatness of mind."

But the highest praise of Milton's poetry is reserved for Paradise Lost. The circumstances of its composition prompt the famous description of the Restoration period:

That hateful proscription, facetiously termed the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion, had set a mark on the poor, blind, deserted poet, and held him up by name to the hatred of a profligate court and an inconstant people! Venal and licentious scribblers, with just sufficient talent to clothe the thoughts of a pandar in the style of a bellman, were now the favorite writers of the Sovereign and the public.

It was a loathsome herd - which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of Comus, grotesque monsters, half bestial half human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling with obscene dances.... 99

In the midst of this "rabble of Satyrs and Goblins" Macaulay dramatically places the lofty, spotless, and serene muse of Milton. The allusion to Comus is extended as the poet is compared to the Lady in the masque: like his heroine, his strength overcame every calamity. Milton's character emerges from this combination of panegyric and invective as a Stoic martyr. He was serious, majestic, sedate, in spite of all the misfortunes he experienced until "he retired to his hovel to die!" And in this environment he wrote his great epic, investing it with "all that is most lovely and delightful in the physical and moral world."

The conclusion of the essay combines the biography and the literary criticism as Macaulay eulogizes Milton in tones of awe and reverence:

His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, distinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by their superior bloom and sweetness, but by their miraculous efficacy to invigorate and heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the Great Poet and Patriot, without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he laboured for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame. '100

The essay represents the pinnacle of Whig panegyric for

this period. That Macaulay clearly aimed to silence once and for all those Tory detractors who praised the poet and blasphemed the republican is clearly evident. It is doubtful that Macaulay fully accomplished this purpose, for Blunt's essay in the Quarterly was a direct reply. On the other hand, the great emphasis on Milton's political activities began to wane after Macaulay. Thorpe attributes the new emphasis on Milton's domestic and personal character to the increasing interest in national affairs which followed the Great Reform Bill in 1832. Certainly in the following period critics found new biographical approaches to Milton's poetry, although the old controversies were slow to die.

Turning now to more well-known writers of the Romantic period, we note at once that John Aikin's criticism of Milton's poetry (1801) reveals no apparent political slant, while his essay on blank verse contains interesting biographical elements which anticipate much later criticism. In Aikin's comments on Samson Agonistes occur certain critical methods which look back to Johnson and others which look ahead to the type of biographical criticism employed by David Masson. Aikin follows Johnson in postulating a literary character and a personal character for Milton, but he looks ahead to later criticism in using incidents from the poet's life, materials which Johnson kept carefully separate from the literary character and the criticism, to interpret particular passages in the poetry. Thus Aikin uses both the literary and the personal character in his

criticism. To be sure, his use of explicit biographical material, apart from characteristics of temperament and genius, is somewhat hesitant and slight, but in the development of biographical criticism his method is noteworthy and significant.

The literary character of Milton postulated by Aikin follows the established eighteenth century pattern of nobility and sublimity. The poems are approached on the basis of the "pious and virtuous sentiments" which Milton intended to inculcate. Milton's mind was animated by the genuine "fire of poetry" and exalted by the "noblest sentiments of philosophy." Aikin states that the epic poet had great imaginative power which carried him to the greatest heights of sublimity.

Milton's moral or personal character as seen by Aikin lies between the Whig view of the stern republican and Johnson's portrait of a morose egoist. Aikin states that Hayley's panegyric representation is hardly true in picturing the poet as the most amiable of men. He finds an austerity of temper and a proud egotism especially in his old age which somewhat cloud the great piety and high morals of "this great man."¹⁰³ In his criticism of Samson Agonistes Aikin states that the "severe simplicity of the Grecian theatre" best suited the mood of Milton's declining years. The poet had grown increasingly austere and serious of temper. "It would be vain to expect either high poetry, or impassioned tenderness, in this performance; but what the

author intended, he has well executed." Milton desired to set forth "weighty philosophical and pious maxims." He also succeeded in giving a striking example of "patient endurance, and resignation in adversity, accompanied with invincible courage." Aikin then adds that the poet himself did not practice passive submission, and in his drama he spoke directly of events in the Revolutionary Period when Cromwell's forces were triumphant. Milton's main purpose in Samson Agonistes "was to inculcate inviolable attachment to country and true religion."

Another instance in which Aikin uses biographical material in his criticism occurs in his discussion of Dalila.¹⁰⁴ He notes that Milton may have intended to write a satire against bad wives; certainly he did not spare them in his drama. In both Samson and Paradise Lost he set forth his views on the "despotic power" of husbands which he himself practiced. In spite of the fact that he "deified" the female sex in Comus, the poet was, in his own home, a lordly assertor of masculine superiority. This prejudice he incorporated into his later poems - especially into the drama which was written when his "fancy was cooled" and proud austerity was the predominant feature of his personal character.

In his essay "On Genius and Common Sense," (1816), William Hazlitt set forth his ideas on passion and imagination and related them to the production of a literary work of art.¹⁰⁵ Simply stated, it may be said that Hazlitt's

critical principles rest on his theory of the imagination - "the power of carrying on a given feeling into other situations" - whereby the strong feelings experienced by the poet are brought into new combinations by this creative faculty. Thus, while Hazlitt's criticism rests on a philosophical basis, the biographical element is important since passion based on personal interest must precede the imaginative process. He states that the personal element may sometimes overwhelm the imaginative faculty as in the case of Rousseau, but usually the power of imagination is proportionable to the strength and depth of feeling.

Hazlitt then adds one important qualification: It is rarely that "a man even of lofty genius will be able to do more than carry on his own feelings and character, or some prominent and ruling passion, into fictitious and uncommon situations." According to Hazlitt, Milton "by allusion" brought much of his political and personal life into the chief incidents and characters of Paradise Lost. "He has, no doubt, wonderfully adapted and heightened them, but the elements are the same; you trace the bias and opinions of the man in the creations of the poet."¹⁰⁶

Like Coleridge and Francis Jeffrey, Hazlitt interprets Milton's genius as essentially undramatic. In his review of Comus, he states that Milton saw "all objects from his own point of view, and with certain exclusive preferences."¹⁰⁷ He also contrasts Milton and Shakespeare on the basis of the personal character of their works, stating that

Shakespeare possessed no personal character and did not participate in his scenes and characters. Milton's characters, however, served only as a vehicle for his own sentiments. Hazlitt considers Comus a strictly didactic poem, a discussion of Milton's views on the relative merits of virtue and vice. For this reason it "wants interest and passion." The masque is inferior to Lycidas and Samson Agonistes. Lycidas expresses the "classical sentiment" of a youthful scholar. ¹⁰⁸ Samson Agonistes conveys "all the high moral and religious prejudices of his maturer years." ¹⁰⁹ In his essay "On Shakespeare and Milton" (1818), Hazlitt again compared England's two great poets on the point of biographical content in their works. ¹¹⁰ Shakespeare, with little religious enthusiasm, no "bigotry of his age," and slight political interests revealed in his works, forms a direct contrast to Milton, whose works are permeated with his thoughts and emotions.

He had his thoughts constantly fixed on the contemplation of the Hebrew theocracy, and of a perfect Commonwealth; and he seized the pen with a hand just warm from the touch of the ark of faith. His religious zeal infused its character into his imagination; so that he devotes himself with the same sense of duty to the cultivation of his genius, as he did to the exercise of virtue, or the good of his country. The spirit of the poet, the patriot, and the prophet, vied with each other in his breast.¹¹¹

Hazlitt's most extended analysis of the poetry deals with Satan, and here his praise for Milton's artistry is unlimited while the biographical element in the criticism is most evident. In discussing the splendor of Satan's figure,

Hazlitt says that Milton was "too magnanimous and open an antagonist to support his arguments by the bye-tricks of a hump and cloven foot; to bring into the fair field of controversy the good old catholic prejudices...he relied on the justice of his cause and did not scruple to give the devil his due." To the charge that Milton made Satan too sympathetic a figure, he asserts that Milton's love of religion and his love of rebellion both exposed him to this danger. Both of these motives probably contributed to his choice of an epic subject.

The speeches and debates in Pandemonium Hazlitt highly esteems. The "manly tone" and "eloquent dogmatism" which lend such conviction to the speeches of the fallen angels are attributed to Milton's spirit of partisanship. The same tone is observed in Milton's descriptions, and this too is traced to the political controversies.¹¹² The "severity of impassioned prose" sometimes condemned in Milton's poetry Hazlitt praises as one of its chief excellences. "The author might here put his philippics against Salmasius to good account."¹¹³ This frequent reference in Hazlitt's criticism to Milton's political life is not surprising when considered with his opinions of Milton's patriotism:

We have no less respect for the memory of Milton as a patriot than as a poet. Whether he was a true patriot, we shall not inquire: he was at least a consistent one. He did not retract his defence of the people of England; he did not say that his sonnets to Vane or Cromwell were meant ironically; he was not appointed Poet Laureat to a court which he reviled and insulted; he accepted neither place

nor pension; nor did he write paltry sonnets upon the 'Royal fortitude' of the House of Stuart, by which, however, they really lost something.¹¹⁴

Hazlitt's own strong and consistent republican sympathies found in Milton a noble kindred spirit. His bitter condemnations of Southey and Wordsworth for their "turncoat" actions serve only to magnify his esteem for Milton's constant devotion to his lost cause. This great admiration for Milton's political life is obvious in the literary criticism.

Hazlitt's conception of Milton as a man portrays him as a solitary genius dedicated to the noblest pursuits in politics and poetry. His literary criticism also reflects this attitude: "The power of his mind is stamped on every line." He believes that Milton's great mental powers are best seen in the characters of Adam, Eve, and Satan, yet the force of his imagination is present everywhere in the poetry. Like Dante, Milton was an active political partisan, and the conviction of tone in all his descriptive passages "probably derived from his spirit of partisanship."¹¹⁵ In his essay "On the Character of Milton's Eve." (1816), he distinguishes Milton from all other poets who have described female beauty on the basis of the "moral severity" which¹¹⁶ temper his descriptions. "There is not a line in his works which tends to licentiousness...Milton's voluptuousness is not lascivious or sensual." Hazlitt thinks that Southey's lines on Spenser

Yet not more sweet
Than pure was he, and not more pure than wise;

High priest of all the Muses' mysteries.
 are much more appropriately applied to Milton, whose character was distinguished by tenderness and purity as well as by sublimity and strength. Hazlitt found all of these qualities in Milton's poetry. He used the poetry as a valid index of the poet's personality.

As a critic of Milton's poetry, Percy Bysshe Shelley is most famous for his remarks on the character of Satan and for his sincere belief that the fallen angel is the true hero of Paradise Lost.¹¹⁷ Shelley's interpretation of Satan is certainly consistent with his own political and religious views, and it appears to have been influenced by his idea of Milton's personal character. In the Preface to Prometheus Unbound, Shelley states at once his opinion of Milton as man and poet and at the same time reveals his own political and religious sympathies:

We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and bold enquirer into morals and religion.¹¹⁸

To the young nineteenth century political and religious radical it was sheer fallacy to interpret Satan as a personification of evil. On the contrary, he viewed Satan as a moral being of tremendous stature who was far superior to Milton's God. The characteristics of Satan he most admired and stressed were the same that Hazlitt esteemed in Milton's political career: the unswerving devotion to a

cause in spite of adversity and persecution. Shelley too found this perseverance in republican principles of reform a sort of ideal inspiration.

Milton's God receives Shelley's strongest censure as a being "who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to new torments." ¹¹⁹ These remarks recall the youthful writer of The Necessity of Atheism and his unqualified attack on orthodox Christianity in Queen Mab. Shelley insists that Milton, whether consciously or not, "violated the popular creed" by making the Devil a heroic figure possessing the Shelleyan ideals of strength and energy devoted to a cause he deemed excellent: "Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in Paradise Lost." The epic "contains a philosophical refutation of that system of which, by a strange and natural antithesis, it has been a chief popular support." Shelley admits the difficulty of determining how far Milton was conscious of the difference in his religious creed and the popular views of the time, but he insists that he was a philosopher of the very greatest power - an inspired teacher of truth - and above all a republican. It would seem that Shelley drew the a priori conclusion that Milton, possessing these great virtues, could not help being sympathetic with the cause of Satan —

and his nineteenth century idolator.

Certainly if this were not the case, Shelley's judgments would collapse, for his interpretation of Satan is tied in with his opinion of Milton as a republican idealist who sought to inculcate eternal truth. The truth in this case would be, of course, the republican and humanitarian ideals held by Shelley himself. Shelley believed that Milton was a great philosopher because his spirit was deeply penetrated by the reforming spirit of the ancient religions. This spirit of reform permeates his poetry.

Shelley's opinion of Paradise Lost seems to derive from his evaluation of Milton's character. He praises the poem as a great picture of epic truth stamped with the "eternity of genius." The true value of the epic rests on its power to "excite the sympathy of succeeding generations of mankind."

He mingled as it were the elements of human nature as colours upon a single pallet, and arranged them into the composition of his great picture, according to the laws of epic truth; that is, according to the laws of that principle by which a series of actions of intelligent and ethical beings, developed in a rhythmical tale, are calculated to excite the sympathy and antipathy of succeeding generations of mankind. The writer who would have attributed majesty and beauty to the character of victorious and vindictive omnipotence, must have been contented with the character of a good Christian; he never could have been a great epic poet.¹²⁰

He finds it difficult to decide whether Milton was a Christian when he composed Paradise Lost, but it is certain that he gives Satan "all imaginable advantage." Milton exposes the injustice of his God in the poem by arguments which, if they had been printed as such, "would have been

answered by the most conclusive of syllogisms — persecution."

After considering the brief and scattered remarks that constitute Shelley's contribution to Milton criticism, it would seem that they show more clearly the rebellious personality and the reforming ideals of the author than they cast significant light on Milton's character and works.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's writings on Milton form only a small part of his critical works, but his opinions of Milton as a man and poet reflect an unqualified admiration of both. Like Hazlitt, his critical principles rest on a philosophical basis, but his approach to Milton's poetry is through the man. Coleridge describes Shakespeare's poetry as characterless, meaning that it does not reflect the individual Shakespeare. But on reading Paradise Lost,¹²¹ Coleridge said that he found John Milton in every line. This attitude which viewed Milton as the "deity of prescience" appears consistently in the scattered fragments which make up his Milton criticism; for this reason it is somewhat difficult to separate his critical approach to Paradise Lost from his personal opinion of Milton's character. In fact, so closely are the two related that a knowledge of the critic's conception of Milton's character offers the true key to his criticism of the poetry.

In his lecture on Milton and Paradise Lost, Coleridge approached his subject from a historical standpoint; he considered it essential that the reader of Milton's epic be aware of the nidus or soil which produced the poet:

I could not prevail on myself to approach the Paradise Lost without impressing on your minds the conditions under which such a work was in fact producible at all, the original genius having been assumed as the immediate agent and efficient cause; and these conditions I find in the character of the times and in his own character.¹²²

Coleridge states that Milton inherited and represented the best qualities of the Elizabethan and Commonwealth periods.¹²³ He received his education and spent his formative years in "one golden aera of profound erudition and individual genius." The period of his later life was also favorable to the development of Milton's mind in giving it a "sternness of discipline." Milton was won over from the "dear-loved delights of academic groves and cathedral aisles" to the disciplined self-control of the anti-prelatic party. The controversial religious spirit of the seventeenth century affected Milton to the point of visibly influencing his presentation of God in Paradise Lost.¹²⁴ Pope's statement that Milton makes God the Father a school-divine, so far as it is just, must be charged to the character of the times. Similarly, the controversial tone seen in other parts of Paradise Lost derives immediately from the great controversy between the Arminians and Calvinists concerning the origin of evil.¹²⁵

Coleridge's praise of Milton's character is as great as Macaulay's. It represents a sincere tribute to the man, the poet, the patriot, and his greatest work:

In his mind itself there were purity and piety absolute; an imagination to which neither the

past nor the present were interesting, except as far as they called forth and enlivened the great ideal, in which and for which he lived; a keen love of truth, which, after many weary pursuits, found a harbour in a sublime listening to the still voice in his own spirit, and as keen a love of his country, which, after a disappointment still more depressive, expanded and soared into a life of man as a probationer of immortality. These were, these alone could be, the conditions under which such a work as the Paradise Lost could be conceived and accomplished.¹²⁶

The statement that Milton is revealed in all of his poems - and especially in the characters of Satan, Adam, Raphael, and "almost his Eve," marks the highest point of Coleridge's praise for the poetry. In these characters Coleridge discovers a great revelation of Milton's personality. The purity of Adam and Eve before the fall is the literary representation of Milton's own purity, while the nobility of Raphael discloses that facet of the poet's character. Satan's great qualities - his "singularity of daring" - and his "grandeur of sufferance" - stem from the identical traits possessed by Milton and represent the true poetic sublime:

In the Paradise Lost the sublimest parts are the revelations of Milton's own mind, producing itself and evolving its own greatness; and this is so truly so, that when that which is merely entertaining for its objective beauty is introduced, it at first seems a discord.¹²⁷

Milton's descriptions of Paradise show his "sunny side"; the reader cannot help but feel his genuine love of domestic pleasures "notwithstanding the discomforts which actually resulted from an apparently unhappy choice in marriage."

The key to Coleridge's Milton criticism is an understanding of his idea of Milton's great egotism which was a

"revelation of spirit." He believed that Paradise Lost should be read and studied for this reason - to discover the "deep sense of grandeur and the purity of Milton's soul." The poem represented Milton's personal record of all his unrealized hopes in religion, politics, society. In his old age when he found it impossible to realize his aspirations, he "gave up his heart to the living spirit and light within him, and avenged himself on the world by enriching it with this record of his own transcendent ideal."

William Ellery Channing's essay on Milton (1826) was prompted by the publication of De Doctrina Christiana, but like Macaulay's review of Milton's religious treatise it is more accurately described as a fervent tribute to Milton's character and poetic genius.¹²⁸ Channing's essay contains little original criticism; indeed, William Hazlitt complained that the American writer's opinions were merely an echo of what had been said again and again by English critics. Like Dr. Johnson, Channing separates Milton's poetic character from his moral character; but unlike his predecessor, the Unitarian minister finds the dichotomy in harmonious agreement. Milton's character as a man was distinguished by sublimity; the same great quality marks his poetry:

His name is almost identified by sublimity. He is in truth the sublimest of men. He rises, not by effort or discipline, but by a native tendency and a godlike instinct to the contemplation of objects of grandeur and awfulness. He always moves with a conscious energy. There is no subject so vast or terrific, as to repel or intimidate him....129

Channing makes the now familiar assertion that the grandeur of Milton's mind and the sublimity of his thoughts impressed themselves on every line that he wrote. To read his poems is to become immediately aware of the tremendous stature of the man behind them. Many qualities of Milton's personality are illustrated directly from the poetry. Thus the descriptions in Comus illustrate his refined sensibility and his susceptibility to natural beauty. Milton's tenderness and his profound but self-possessed emotional capacity illuminate the entire masque.

Paradise Lost, "the noblest monument of human genius," reveals a mind "triumphant over the most terrible powers of nature." Satan is an ennobling manifestation of Milton's sublime consciousness, and "many a virtuous man has borrowed new strength from the force, constancy, and dauntless courage of evil agents." Channing gives unqualified praise to Milton's versification, but he insists that Milton's power over language was not due to his "musical ear." It was a unique quality of the man. "It belongs to the soul." Milton's great gift of harmony could bring all things under its influence and impress them into "sounds, motions, material forms." His intense thoughts and feelings could transform whatever they touched into powerful and harmonious verse.

Besides sublimity and power, Milton's poetry is characterized by seriousness. Channing says that Milton's personality was too grave and solemn "to indulge...in light

and gay creations, even had his genius been more sportive and flexible." The time in which he lived was too solemn and eventful, and the poet himself was engaged in "transactions too perilous" to produce anything other than "high thoughts and motives." But though the poetry is habitually serious, Channing asserts that it is never gloomy or morose.

He took no pleasure in drawing dark pictures of life; for he knew by experience, that there is a power in the soul to transmute calamity into an occasion and nutriment of moral power and triumphant virtue.¹³⁰

Channing's account of Milton's political conduct echoes William Hayley's earlier opinion that an ideal pursuit of liberty motivated all of his actions. Milton's greatness of mind shines clear in his political writings as does his constant attachment to freedom in all forms. The great poet believed in perpetual human progress towards virtue; this motivated and inspired all of his works. "It threw a hue of poetry over politics, and gave a sublime reference to his service of the commonwealth." He stood alone with his high faculties untainted in a depraved age.

According to Channing, Milton's character as a man was marked by magnanimity and piety. He dismisses the old conflict between Milton and Johnson as irrelevant since both men moved in different spheres and were great in different ways. Johnson was a Giant on earth - "mighty but of an earth-born race." Milton, on the other hand, was a little below the angels. He should be ranked "among Seraphs," for he "burned with a deep yet calm love of moral grandeur

and celestial purity." The panegyric terms which Channing uses in his descriptions of the moral character and the poetry are identical and apparently stem from the same source. The biographical element and the literary criticism in Channing's essay are inextricably fused and blended.

SUMMARY

Although Johnson's highly derogatory picture of Milton as a man was dictated in part, at least, by his prejudices against the poet's political activities, the Tory critic formulated a literary character, as distinct from the personal character of Milton, when he considered the poetry. It appears that Johnson's strong political prejudices did not color his literary criticism. However, his obvious animosity provoked replies from the poet's numerous defenders which marked the next fifty years as a period of critical controversy concerning Milton's private and public character and conduct. The literary criticism was necessarily affected by the sharp party lines drawn between Whig and Tory writers. Besides stimulating new interest in Milton's life and character, the Johnson controversy emphasized the separate approaches taken by Liberals and Conservatives in their considerations of Milton's poetry.

The attacks on Johnson by Milton's defenders — Blackburne, Hayley, Neve, and Symmons, as well as numerous periodical writers — point up the poet's prominent place in the liberal literary and political movements of this period. The Monthly Review and the Edinburgh Review, giving Milton unqualified praise as the great defender of English liberties, emphasized his activities during the Great Rebellion and Commonwealth periods. Some writers for

the liberal periodicals began to relate the biography to the poetry, either by finding the man in the works or by using biographical material to interpret the poetry. This marks an obvious change in critical direction. Bringing Whig panegyric to its climax, Macaulay's essay marked the culmination of the practice of exalting Milton as the Great Whig. Although liberal writers were willing to deal with all sides of Milton's character and career, they often emphasized his patriotism to the point of making literary criticism a secondary consideration. Seldom if ever did they give anything but the highest praise to Milton or his works.

Although a few Tory writers attempted to defend Johnson, most of them agreed that his estimate of Milton's personal character was sharply biased. But the strong political animosity active throughout the eighteenth century prompted the Tory writers for the British Critic and the Quarterly Review to exclude or consciously to play down the middle period of Milton's life when he was involved in controversies for Cromwell and the Puritan cause. Some conservative writers illustrated Milton's character entirely from his early poetry to achieve a picture agreeable to their own views. Often they merely retained the earlier stereotype of the Sacred Bard. A fairly common policy was to consider Milton a poetic visionary without practical experience or knowledge of the world. All these methods designed to "purify" Milton in order to "save the poetry" appear in

J. J. Blunt's reply to Macaulay.

The English Romantic writers were unanimously agreed on Milton's great poetic genius. Shelley, Hazlitt, Coleridge, and Channing exalted him as the symbol of noble patriotism and republican ideals. Both Milton's public and personal character received the highest praise from these writers. John Aikin's use of biographical material to interpret the poetry anticipated the practice of many later critics. Coleridge and Hazlitt considered Milton the most subjective of poets. In denying him any dramatic faculty, they saw his great personality directly reflected in his works.

The major critics and most minor writers of this period approached Milton's poetry through their idea of the man. It is significant for their literary criticism that the Romantics and Channing felt strong political or religious sympathies with the Puritan poet. The period is significant not only as a time of controversy and transition, but also for the readily discernible development of the biographical method in the interpretation of the poetry.

CHAPTER III

MILTON CRITICISM: 1830-1860

- A. American Periodical Criticism
- B. British Periodical Criticism
- C. Biographers and Critics

. . . though fallen on evil days,
On evil days though fallen and evil tongues

To nineteenth century New England the name of Milton exerted a stronger appeal than that of any other writer. In view of the historical background of that region with its strong Puritan ties and republican sympathies, it is hardly surprising to find that Paradise Lost became practically a text-book and Milton the unofficial poet laureate. Following the publication of Channing's and Macaulay's essays, American periodicals, led by the North American Review, vied with each other in their veneration of the Puritan poet. Again and again they heaped upon his memory the most exalted epithets they could find in their inexhaustible stores of panegyric.

The consistent approach to the poetry was through their composite image of the man: the republican martyr to truth seen in the prose writings and the Puritan poet of sacred subjects seen in the later poems. The distinction should be made at once, however, that New England writers postulated no poetic or literary character for Milton separate from the moral character. To them the Johnsonian dichotomy might never have been. The virtues of the man, whether as Cromwell's Latin Secretary, the husband of Mary Powell, or the insulter of Salmasius, sprang from the same "heart that fed" the natural expression of the great poet. The separate concepts of Milton - youthful scholar, sacred poet, stern republican, patriotic citizen, and pious Puritan - each exerted a strong appeal to New Englanders. Symbolizing a "composition of the best

and honorablest things," he became an almost holy standard of human perfection.¹ With this great interest in the character of the man, it was perhaps inevitable that the biography provide the basis for the literary criticism.

In 1830, W. B. O. Peabody reviewed M. Villemain's Mélanges Historiques et Littéraires for the North American Review and showed little sympathy with the French critic's strictures on Milton's minor poems.² He scolds Villemain for not giving Milton's sonnets "even the cold tribute of a passing glance," and adds that despite the "contemptuous intimations of Johnson," some of them are of the "very first order of excellence..." Similarly, Villemain's limited praise of Comus seems entirely inadequate for the American reviewer:

But it is a little singular, that anyone who is capable of appreciating Milton's genius, should be insensible to that deep harmony, which enforces attention like the tongues of dying men, to the grace and richness of that language, and the elevated dignity of the sentiments of that unrivalled production; where genius breaks from the cloud, in which the imitation of inferior models seems at first to shroud it, and stands forth like Aeneas, in all the pride of manly and celestial beauty.³

He is particularly pleased that Villemain does justice to Paradise Lost, but he regrets that only the first few books are noted for their sublimity. To the reviewer, Milton's epic is the inimitable, the "native dialect of surpassing genius..." In the epic, the poet "appears like the spirit in his progress through the realms of chaos; who, though he may occasionally approach some inferior orbs, is still

pursuing his majestic flight towards the garden of God."

Peabody finds Villemain's unfavorable remarks on Milton's prose works unsuitable for a "friend and advocate of liberal principles..." The French critic expressed his dislike for Milton's acerbity, but, the reviewer says, surely he might be expected to pardon the great defender of liberty, when he had fallen on "evil days and evil tongues."

It is painful to see liberal and accomplished minds visiting with relentless severity of censure those occasional violations of propriety and correct taste, which are found in the controversial writings of...the stern old warrior....⁴

He states that Milton's bitter controversial spirit was a natural outgrowth of his time when all men lived in "one vast limbo-paradise of controversy." Ridicule, libel, and invective, were the fashion of the day; the faults of Milton were the faults of his age while his "beauties" were peculiarly his own.

The concept of Milton as a sacred poet alluded to by Peabody was set forth more directly by two writers for the North American Review in the same year.⁵ The anonymous reviewer of Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews states that Milton's genius was "early baptized" in the fountain of the sacred poets. It was from

...Siloa's brook, that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God...

that he invoked his "heavenly muse" to inspire his "adventurous song." The poet's familiarity with the Hebrew

language yielded him all of its literary treasures, and "Paradise Lost exhibits on every page the impress of a mind most thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the sacred poets." He says that from his contact with Hebrew poetry Milton gained "inspiration, with a vividness of fancy, a grandeur of imagination, and original simplicity and purity of thought, a power of sublime expression and imagery, and a reverence for all that is wise and good, which might have been sought in vain from the study of the literature of all other nations." Milton's great moral and intellectual strength was nourished by the spring of the sacred poets, and the indescribable beauty of his poetry derives its purity and sublimity from this divine source.

George B. Cheever's article on the history of English poetry gives a fine summary of the New England attitude towards Puritanism and Milton's place as a poet in his religious sect.⁶ In this exalted portrait there is little similarity to the humorous stock caricature made famous by Butler and the Restoration dramatists. To Cheever, the seventeenth century Puritans were a class who cannot be judged by ordinary rules. They were above and apart from their fellow men — "stern patriots and martyrs" — who burned with an unearthly enthusiasm for religion and the word of God. They were "severe and immovable, as if inaccessible to human passion; inflexible and haughty to man, because reverence was due only to the Most High; despising

all accomplishments and all learning, because they counted them as nothing, in comparison with religion and the word of God."

Cheever asserts that Milton possessed some of these typical Puritan qualities. He stood above his age, however, and owed no debt to his contemporaries. His "melancholy genius" partook of the stern Puritan rigor, but his imagination was so great that it lifted him too far above other men to expect that they could understand or follow his teachings. Cheever sees Milton as a sort of divine interpreter of the ways of Providence. Accordingly, his poetry is solemn and dignified, "as well becomes the moral sublimity of his character, and the sacredness of his awful theme." Undoubtedly, he states, Milton's mind was elevated above the ordinary Puritan's by his "holy contemplation" and the inspiration he derived from the "sublimest thoughts." It is merely superfluous to add that Milton's moral influence is always pure. How could it be otherwise with a man whose greatest work intends to vindicate the ways of God to man?

Cheever dismisses the charge that Milton makes the figure of Satan too attractive while admitting that the fallen angel is a magnificent artistic creation. Satan does possess sublime attributes, but his qualities of fierce energy and the unbroken will to succeed are too "fearfully sublime" to inspire feelings other than wonder and awe. Satan can never inspire with love. Milton exhibited in the fallen angel his own great intellectual power, but he had

no intention of making Satan an attractive figure. "If there be aught to admire, there is, at least, nothing to imitate."

Through all the writings of Milton, the New Englander finds a "loftiness and grandeur, which seems to raise the soul to the standard of his own elevation." He notes that the greatest and finest minds have always found in Milton's writings "rich treasures of eloquence and wisdom; and they might also find in them the more enduring treasures of piety and virtue." Thus Milton possessed the finest Puritan characteristics though in his lofty person they were raised to a heightened level of grandeur. The man was seen directly in the poetry, for the true object of poetry, according to this writer, is to raise the mind above "all low and sordid purposes and to fix its desires upon things which are honorable and high...the noblest instrument to elevate and purify the heart." Milton performed this act without effort, endowed as he was with the greatest gifts given by God to man.

A writer for the American Quarterly Observer remarked in 1833 that the best literary efforts result when the mind of the author is in perfect harmony with his proposed subject.⁷ There is, he says, an affinity between some subjects and some minds, and "every reader rejoices that Milton's mind lighted on such a theme as *Paradise Lost*." The Puritan poet possessed all the "glow of soul," all the "high conception of the sublime and beautiful in morals"

to fit him for his great task. He was born to be a poet above all other things; the best testimony to this fact is his great epic.

In the same year an article appeared in this periodical concerning the evils of alcohol and the virtue of temperance.⁸ The anonymous writer derides the "vice and debauchery" of the Restoration period, and then, like Macaulay, suddenly unveils the figure of Milton - "temperate as the first man" - amidst scenes of "amazing wickedness." The rest of the article develops at length the role of Milton as the exponent of the "purest spirit of temperance." Passages from most of the poems are quoted to support the thesis that Milton was a vigorous enemy to all forms of spirits. The writer makes quite a case for Comus and interprets the masque in a manner which suggests that Milton wrote it for no other purpose than to confute the alcoholism of his own "sensual age." He declares that the "purity of Milton's life is well-known; and the high estimate he put upon one of his favourite virtues, abstinence in diet, may be learned from very many passages both in his prose and poetry." This nineteenth century version of the now familiar advertising testimonial shows but one facet of Milton's great appeal to New England during this period.

In 1834, The Knickerbocker, a New York periodical which flourished in this period, mockingly compared Milton's stature as an epic poet with Robert Montgomery, the author of a recent epic, The Messiah.⁹ The reviewer's chief

purpose was to defend Milton's place as the chief of epic poets against the would-be usurper through a rather low brand of Swiftian irony. This writer, unusual in this period of American criticism, actually finds a defect in Milton's epic in the introduction of pagan figures which appears "at variance with the most evident propriety." In fact, the mere attempt to measure heaven and earth in human terms seems so staggering an effort that he doubts that it could have ever been achieved by anyone other than Milton. Only the "unrivaled and transcendent genius of the author could possibly have sustained him in the performance of a labour so gigantic..." He insists that Milton alone, "in despite of a severe and unpersuasive style, an uneven and ungraceful rhetoric, and a design so ponderous, could preserve himself with eagle pinion...." Milton's epic contains the finest characteristics of the drama. It is well-unified, possessing a beginning, middle, and end, and all parts are immediately dependent on each other. He adds that it is in fact a regular tragedy, and as we are told that Milton originally intended to write a tragedy, and not an epic, he retained his "original distribution of the subject, while changing his plan."

The writer praises Paradise Regained as a work which no reader could possibly want to change in any way. The occasional digressions "into the fields of ancient learning" are handled by Milton with a "lofty grace inimitable to

this great man." Religious literature was the field in which "the old bard luxuriated, and bating the sometime pedantry of the thing, there is a fine dust-like antiquity about these passages, which commends them with solemn emphasis to the spirit of the reader..." Needless to say, Montgomery and The Messiah fare badly in this comparison. The new epic which would challenge Paradise Lost is dismissed as a work of dull mediocrity with no claim to the notice of "Gods, men, or magazines."

The North American Review in 1835 presented a long article on the popular Dr. Channing and found opportunity to notice his essay on Milton published nine years earlier.¹⁰ The anonymous writer finds Channing particularly suited as a commentator on Milton's poetry, not only because of the Unitarian's religious views, but also because of his propensity to do full justice to his subject. To this writer, Paradise Lost furnishes the "most remarkable instance" in which the highest results of thought are combined with the "brilliant and glowing creations of fancy."

The reason why Milton was capable of producing such a work was, that he combined, as all who are capable of producing the highest excellence must combine, the faculties that belong to Philosophy and Poetry in equal perfection. Divine Philosophy had supplied him with the materials, which poetry enabled him to work up with so much effect.¹¹

The reviewer adds that Channing, in his great zeal to "clear up the fame of Milton," dealt too harshly with

Dr. Johnson and his political prejudices, but on the whole the Unitarian minister's fervent tribute to Milton's character and poetry is regarded as the touchstone to the New England attitude towards Milton.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's estimate of Milton appeared in the North American Review of 1838.¹² Emerson's tribute reflects the great interest in Milton's "innate worth" as a man at this time and the declining attention paid to his role as a controversial political writer. He believed that Milton occupied a unique position in this period; indeed, he speculates that criticism after 1825 shows an attitude towards Milton different from that of any other period, which implies in the poet "merit indisputable and illustrious; yet so near to the modern mind as to be still alive and life-giving." As he states

We have lost all interest in Milton as the redoubted disputant of a sect; but by his own innate worth this man has steadily risen in the world's reverence, and occupies a more imposing place in the mind of men at this hour than ever before.¹³

Yet in spite of this assertion, Emerson shares with other New England writers of his time the high esteem for Milton as an heroic defender of liberty; he asserts that the poet was drawn into the political controversies of his times but was never lost in narrow party strife. "His private opinions and private conscience always distinguished him. That which drew him to the party was his love of liberty, ideal liberty; this therefore he could not sacrifice to

any party." Milton was a true "apostle of freedom," and Emerson enumerates with obvious pleasure the types of liberty the poet championed: domestic liberty, civil liberty, religious liberty, and literary liberty. His ideas on all these subjects were far in advance of his age; to Emerson they appear as ideals designed for man as he should be — a nation of Miltons. He believes that Milton's ideas on freedom reveal his deeply-held, spiritualistic love of truth. The prose tracts concerning these various freedoms represent different forms of one central principle, "the liberty of the wise man"; to Emerson, Milton's ideas of freedom were as fresh and pertinent in 1838 as they were in his own lifetime.

The New England transcendentalist carefully separates Milton from the other Puritans of his time, partly on the basis of his poetic genius and his great knowledge of the humanities. To be sure, Milton shared with his fellows the religious zeal which distinguished the Puritan sect, but he lacked the stern fanaticism which so often accompanied the more admirable qualities. "His muse was brave and humane, as well as sweet." His warm humanity blended with his spiritual strength to raise him to the heights of "antique heroism."

He is rightly dear to mankind, because in him, — among so many perverse and partial men of genius, — in him humanity rights itself; the old eternal goodness finds a home in his breast, and for once shows itself beautiful. His gifts are subordinated to his moral sentiments.¹⁴

Thus Milton fulfills the great role of the poet as the ideal, complete man formulated in Emerson's Essays, and it is difficult to understand why he did not include him in Representative Men since he pointedly states in this article that Shakespeare comes to us as a mere voice while Milton's tremendous figure as a man looms behind all of his writings. Emerson does not, like Carlyle, deny Milton heroic stature because his personality is obvious in the poetry.

Emerson gives most of his attention to Milton's character, and he notes that this tribute necessarily precedes any consideration of the poetry since the true perception of Milton as a "purer ideal of humanity" definitely modifies the estimate of his poetic genius. If literary criticism takes second place, then, it is because the "man is paramount to the poet." He goes on to say that each of the poems should be interpreted biographically as a direct illustration of the "soul of this divine creature..." In all Milton's poems the "sublimest song" remains always the unmistakable voice of Milton; the reader "may see under a thin veil, the opinions, the feelings, even the incidents of the poet's life, still reappearing." Thus the sonnets are occasional poems while L'Allegro and Il Penseroso are a "finer autobiography of his youthful fancies at Harefield." Comus is but a record "in charming numbers" of the philosophy of chastity which he stated later in The Reason of Church

Government as his defence against personal attacks on his morals. Emerson declares that Samson Agonistes unmistakably expresses Milton's "private griefs" during the Restoration era; the drama is the prose counterpart of The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce. Beyond this statement he does not go, but if the implications were pushed to their logical limits Milton's marital difficulties with Mary Powell would evidently be the key to his classical drama. Further, Emerson says that the best, most affecting passages of Paradise Lost are the purely personal allusions to the poet's own life, and, "when we are fairly in Eden, Adam and Milton are often difficult to be separated." Emerson values Paradise Regained because it shows distinctly the progress of Milton's mind in "the revision and enlargement of his religious opinions."

Since he emphasizes Milton's poems only as a revealing testament of the great character of the man, the question rises whether Emerson necessarily detracts from their worth as literary works of art. Certainly the poetry does take second place by Emerson's insistence that Milton must be approached first and always as a man, as an exemplification of the "heroic life of man." But the core of the theory lies in the statement that his life is the true poem of which the "indignant pamphlets" and the "soaring poems" remain only "single cantos or detached stanzas."

It was plainly needful that his poetry should be a version of his own life, in order to give weight and solemnity to his thoughts; by which they might penetrate and possess the imagination and the will of mankind.¹⁵

The above sentence well conveys Emerson's idea that Milton's real value lies in his role as a teacher through the example of his perfect life. The worth of his poetry, then, depends upon the reader's ability to discover the man behind the harmonious blank verse and the majestic diction: "For are we not better; are not all men fortified by the remembrance of the bravery, the purity, the temperance, the toil, the independence, and the angelic devotion of this man, who, in a revolutionary age, taking counsel only of himself, endeavoured, in his writings and in his life, to carry out the life of man to new heights of spiritual grace and dignity, without any abatement of its strength?"

Appearing in the most influential American periodical of the time, Emerson's essay indicates the great veneration felt towards Milton in New England, and, as he states, it shows the shift in interest from the politician to the innate character of the man which gradually occurred after Macaulay's and Channing's essays in 1825. Most significant for this thesis, of course, is Emerson's great reliance on biographical material to throw light on the poetry. To be sure, his opinions of the poems are undeveloped and are subordinated to his consuming interest in the man; however, when contrasted with earlier critics like Aikin, Emerson's

rather brief comments indicate the extent to which biography was coming to be used in the critical interpretation of Milton's poetry.

When Chateaubriand's Sketches of English Literature was published in the next year, the North American Review aimed its heaviest guns at the French critic's thesis that the English Reformation had disastrous effects on art and poetry.¹⁶ This refutation brought forth an interesting historical approach to Milton and at the same time marked clearly the strong Protestant bias of his New England defender. In answer to Chateaubriand, the anonymous reviewer asserts that the Catholic Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries limited reason and free thought and depended primarily on an emotional appeal. The Protestant Reformation, on the other hand, freed man's mind and permitted him to pursue an unfettered quest of truth and knowledge. The Reformation roused a "sterner, deeper feeling"; the mind was turned within, as it were, "to ponder on the import of existence and its future destinies."

The writer then states that the Reformation as comprising a reforming search for truth and freedom is directly manifested in Milton's poetry. He says that the great Puritan was at heart a reformer equal to Luther himself; in doctrine of reform he surpassed all others. Milton proclaimed the rights of man as a rational, immortal being in his prose and poetry "amidst a generation of servile and unprincipled sycophants." His blindness

excluded him from earthly sights but opened up a "more glorious and spiritualized conception of heaven..." Indeed, his blindness actually helped him to convey "those sublime truths" in his poetry which the great opportunity of free inquiry made possible by the Reformation stimulated in his mind. Milton was above all the "child of Protestantism."

Approaching him then as the Protestant poet par excellence, the reviewer traces those qualities in his works which he owed to his religion. True to the spirit of the Reformation, he says, Milton took all of his illustrations from "intellectual sources." This resulted in his magnificent abstract imagery.

Milton borrows his illustrations from intellectual sources; conveys the image of the Almighty by his attributes; and, in the frequent portraiture of Satan suggests only vague conceptions of form, the faint outlines of matter...Indeed, Milton has scarcely anything which may be called scenic decorations, to reproduce a certain stage effect. His actors are few and his action nothing. It is only by their intellectual and moral relations... that he has prepared us for the visions of celestial beauty and grandeur which never fade from our souls.¹⁷

Like Emerson, this writer considers Milton a great teacher of moral truth. He compares the Puritan to Dante to bring out the opposite influences of their religions. In their dialogues both poets used metaphysical discussion, but in Milton these inquiries into man's relation with the universe reflect a "free

mind trained to wrestle boldly on abstrusest points of metaphysical theology..." Dante, however, "follows in the same old, barren footsteps which had been trodden by the schoolmen." Though both men were bold and independent in their ideals of liberty, the Protestant poet aspired to a higher type of freedom, a complete freedom of thought uncontrolled by any human authority. Catholicism made it impossible for Dante to aspire to such complete freedom. The writer believes that though Milton had "fallen on evil times," the poet had a firm belief that his voice would be heard by posterity and "would be a light and a guide to the coming generations." He states that this has proved to be the case since many of Milton's ideals of government and education provided the germ for "many of the boasted discoveries in our own day" in social improvements. Milton, he adds, may be truly called "the morning star of that higher civilization which distinguishes our happier era."

The attempt to refute Chateaubriand's strictures thus resulted in an unqualified tribute to Milton as the champion of freedom and moral truth, the thinker whose ideas on government and religion gave impetus to progressive improvement in these fields — an incalculable contribution to Western civilization.

In 1840, as if in direct contradiction to the preceding article, another writer for the North American Review

bluntly stated that too much importance was being given to the influence of "the prevailing spirit of the times" in the critical examination of poetry.¹⁸ It is true, he says, that during Dryden's age the spirit of the times harmed that great writer when he "prostituted his gigantic strength to make sport for the Philistines at the festival of Dagon." But what trace of the Restoration period can be seen in Milton's character or his poetry? He agrees with Wordsworth when he said "his soul was like a star and dwelt apart." The moral degeneracy which formed the prevailing moral climate after 1660 in England affected Milton no more than "the gathering mist impairs the lustre of the star, which hides it for the moment from the eye." Milton's mind was fitted to guide his age, rather than to obey it in any way.

This idea of Milton's independence of thought and action was restated by a writer for the United States Magazine and Democratic Review in 1842.¹⁹ In an article titled "Democracy and Literature" he attempts to prove that great literature and democratic principles are inseparable. He asserts that both democracy and literature "speak to the instinctive aspirations of the human soul after liberty of thought and freedom of expression; both recognize in a wise toleration and an intelligent self-dependence the two great principles of all nobility of character and manly achievement." As the earlier writer for the North American Review attempted to make Protestantism the necessary stimulus to the truth inherent in great art, this writer makes a definite

connection between the politics of the artist and the quality of his creative art. Every true writer will be an ideal patriot and necessarily an independent one. He adds that Milton represents the true ideal of the united patriot and independent. Then, as if impelled to push his argument as far as it will go, he states that a true poet is "inherently and almost necessarily a republican." Again he names Milton as the ideal representative of this "hardy constitution of intellect and conscientious moral sense," a sublime poet and a sublimer patriot. The extent to which New England writers could use Milton to illustrate morality, patriotism, and literary artistry in a rather confused amalgamation of terms appears in this article.

In 1845, the American Review, a professed Whig journal, gave unqualified praise to Milton's independence of mind.²⁰ Now, twenty years after the first appearance of Macaulay's essay, this writer again exposes the "seraph strong" amid the degenerate tumult of the Restoration style:

Nothing on earth was mightier than his force of will. The intense depth and strength of his character, tested both in the endurance and repulse of evil, was the prominent element of his genius...He could exist though the whole pack were howling and flapping around his very dwelling.²¹

Milton's great invulnerability to all outward circumstances is thus noted as essential to his poetic genius. The writer adds that neither Comus nor Paradise Lost could have been written without it. He sees in both poems the "lofty

independence" which sustained the poet when he was left alone with no external support in his "evil days."

This Whig journal took another approach to Milton in 1846.²² The standard Puritan doctrine that the greatest poetry deals with religious subjects was used by the anonymous writer as a means of exalting Milton to the highest place among uninspired writers. The writer asserts that the great Puritan was the most impressively serious of all poets; his mind was "eminently religious." He supports this statement by biographical evidence: Milton's favorite reading was the Hebrew poets; his personal demeanor was austere and grave; and even his youthful face was marked by a severe beauty. His tastes were religious. A daily habit of his was to play anthems on the organ, and, the writer asks, "What other instrument could have filled his mind with those magnificent ideas of space and sound of which his poetry is full?"

He believes that Milton fulfills as nearly as any modern writer can the ancient idea of a poet as prophet or priest, for this role must be filled by a man of holiness and purity. "He must have clean hands and a pure heart that would hymn the glories of the Almighty." Milton's soul remained unmoved by "common loves...or common cares." He required a vast and awful subject to evoke response from his great mind. The result is Paradise Lost, the direct proof that no themes have inspired such eloquence as religion.

A writer for The Knickerbocker (1846) expressed the same idea in the course of a vehement tirade against Byron's "scornful rebellion against the laws of the universe and the very throne of God..."²³ No one, he asserts, could have written a poem like Paradise Lost unless he possessed the highest qualities religion can confer on men. Purity and goodness are altogether requisite to the production of such a work which commends itself "to the love and admiration of the universal mind." Milton's epic reflects the essential moral strength and purity of its author, while Childe Harold is the "offspring of a vigorous but unhealthy mind."

The United States Magazine and Democratic Review noticed Chateaubriand's Sketches in 1850 and agreed essentially with the earlier statements of the North American Review.²⁴ According to this writer, the influence of his age on Milton's character and poetry was primarily one of religious inspiration and moral elevation. Like the ancient sage, Milton was "thrown into the fiery furnace," but he escaped unscathed from all the virulence and abusive argument which marked the controversial seventeenth century. He rejected completely the old prejudices and fallible dogma - the decrees of men - and turned, like other Puritans, to the inspired writings of the Hebrew poets for inspiration and strength. With devout reverence he found the purity and sublimity which distinguish his great literary works. To this writer, too, Milton appears a great benevolent reformer who worked with all the combined

talents of his intellect and heart to regenerate humanity in its ideals of faith and freedom. He was influenced by the spirit of his times to such an extent that a proper understanding of his age is necessary to a complete appreciation of his poetry.

In the next year, the Eclectic Magazine compared Milton with Wordsworth in order to exemplify the chief characteristics of both poets.²⁵ The writer found many points of resemblance: both were proud, pure, extremely self-conscious, and possessed of great intellect and imagination. They attempted the loftiest subjects in their poetry, aspired to fame rather than reputation, and heartily despised their contemporaries. Possessed of great artistic ability and unusual perseverance, they were inspired men, but they could not treat the commonplace subjects successfully. Neither had a sense of humor, but their genius was "baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Both men loved liberty and religion.

Turning next to the differences between the poets, the writer cites many, all of which add to the glory of Milton. In the first place, he states that Milton had more sympathy with men and women, "with the power and glory of this earth" than the Romantic poet who loved inanimate nature. The Puritan's love of liberty was a "wiser and firmer passion, and underwent little change," while Wordsworth "veered and fluctuated." Also, Milton's religion was more solidly fixed, "lay nearer to his heart"; Wordsworth's creed often faded

into "vague mistiness in which the Cross at times was lost." In their duties as citizens, the Romantic was an "idler in the land"; the great Puritan was "an incessant and heroic struggler."

His comparison of their abilities as poets follows the same pattern. He says that Wordsworth could attain to "lofty heights" by conscious effort, but Milton is great "inevitably...and inhaled with pleasure the proud and rare atmosphere of the sublime; Wordsworth comes up to the great — Milton descends to it." The panegyric mounts higher as the writer concludes:

Thus while Wordsworth has left a name, the memory of a character, and many works, which shall illustrate the age when he lived, and exalt him, on the whole, above all Britain's bards of that period, Milton is identified with the glory, not of an age, but of all ages; with the progress of liberty in the world — with the truth and grandeur of the Christian faith and with the honor and dignity of the human species itself.²⁶

In startling contrast to such glorious praise as this is the discordant note sounded by the Southern Quarterly Review in 1850.²⁷ A reviewer of Wordsworth's Poetical Works makes a daring statement for this time in asserting that Paradise Lost is not a religious poem in any sense except for the "few incidents recorded in Genesis, and the use of the holiest names." In reality, he says, Milton's epic is a more daring fiction than King Lear, and as a religious doctrine it is far inferior to Shakespeare's tragedy. He states that much of the poem's present popularity probably

derives from the idea that it inculcates religious truth; to the Southern writer this familiar New England attitude rests on sheer fallacy. It would be purely speculative to relate this almost heretical statement to the growing animosity between New England and the South at this time, but it will be shown later in this section that one Southern periodical with strong Cavalier sympathies deeply resented the adoption of Milton by New England writers as their Puritan hero and wasted no opportunity to destroy his personal character and his literary reputation.

Appropriately enough, a writer for the North American Review, the voice of New England, criticized Wordsworth's poetry in the following year and, whether purposely or not, directly contradicted the Southerner's strictures on Paradise Lost.²⁸ He pictures Milton in the controversies of his time, when "the spirit of freedom and civil and ecclesiastical tyranny" clashed in violent conflict. It was then, he declares, that Milton's "lofty and exquisitely-cultured mind" turned for strength and inspiration to true religion and dedicated his life "to the welfare of man and all noblest ends." Thus it happened that he was able to produce a poem like Paradise Lost, a "temple of song," which represents the holiest, most truly religious poem ever produced by any poet. By this time Milton's name had become synonymous in New England with political and personal freedom and religious piety.

In a review of Keightley's Life of Milton (1856), the

North American Reviewer states that his countrymen have not been backward in the homage they have bestowed upon Milton's genius.²⁹ He names Channing's essay as a work of the first rank in Milton criticism and expresses his gratitude to other American writers who praised the poet. This article is noteworthy for an attack on Johnson's Life which is fully as bitter and acrimonious as any of the immediate Whig rejoinders which first greeted it. This writer's political antipathy to the Tory critic appears to dictate his accusation that Johnson clutched at any straw which gave him opportunity "to slur Milton's fame," together with his inference that the great Tory was always aware of Lauder's forgeries but used them anyway as a weapon in his vehement attack on the poet. He compares Johnson's animosity to Winstanley's vitriolic sketch which described Milton as "a notorious Traitor" who "villanously bely'd that blessed Martyr King Charles the First." It would seem that the writer's statement that "the old fire was still burning" when Johnson wrote applies to his own case as well.

He interprets Milton in the now familiar manner of New England critics, noting his controversial activities during the Great Rebellion but bringing him through the dangers of political faction unharmed. In giving Paradise Lost high praise as a "grand and beautiful poem," he boasts with regional pride that the knowledge of Scripture necessary for a full understanding of the poem is certainly not lacking

in New England. His general critical attitude towards the poetry agrees with Keightley. He believes it not proper to set himself up as a critic, like Johnson and others, in considering Milton's divine work. To consider and weigh its merits and faults would require a mind equal to the poet's own, and few men, he asserts, could lay claim to such a distinction in any period.

In 1857, the North American Review cursorily noticed the progress of Milton's fame in Europe.³⁰ After briefly noting the influence of Paradise Lost on the use of blank verse in Germany, the reviewer turns with obvious relish to Milton's reception by "the simple but earnest Swiss...." He is certain that it would "have cheered the blind old poet" to have seen the esteem in which his lofty verse was held by these "pious and free mountaineers...." But he finds nothing surprising in the fact that "the great English poet of religion and freedom" should be welcomed by the freedom-loving Swiss:

The Swiss were therefore attracted to Milton by the strongest sympathies. They found in his noble lines the utterance of their own deepest feelings and highest aspirations. They were captivated by the profoundness and variety of his learning, and by the brilliancy and boldness of his imagination.³¹

According to this writer the name of Milton was a symbol of freedom that had passed national boundaries; it exerted a direct appeal to all believing in the freedom of democratic principles.

When Tennyson's Idylls of the King were reviewed in

1860 by the New Englander, the opening words of the article were John Milton.³² It would seem that to this writer the most immediate thought received on opening Tennyson's volume was that Milton had once proposed treating the chivalric tales of Arthur and his knights in heroic verse. He takes this opportunity to give a sincere and fervent tribute to the Puritan poet. Reverently he traces Milton's career from his trip to Italy to the publication of Paradise Lost and attempts to explain why the poet did not follow his original plan for an epic poem. He attributes Milton's abandonment of the Arthurian legend and his final choice of subject to his bereavement on the death of Diodati and the "gravity of his maturing manhood...." Certainly, he says, Milton did not hope for wide fame, but only the "affectionate and grateful memory of his countrymen." During the revolution, Milton was fully occupied in "liberty's defence," with little time to plan or write epics, but he came through the religious and political controversies with a mind strengthened, disciplined, and matured by "personal affliction and suffering..." The Great Rebellion and the Commonwealth Period, according to this reviewer, definitely prepared Milton for the production of a "nobler work than the fictitious story of any earthly heroes."

He had been occupied too long with matters far sublimer than the wars of Arthur and the adventures of his knights. He could not descend again from the high places from which he had been doing battle for freedom, for purity of faith and order, and for eternal truth. Now

that the time had come for him to sing, he sang 'of man's first disobedience' and of wise counsels and the mighty acts of God, — and so the epic of King Arthur has remained unwritten until now.³³

It would be difficult to find higher praise extended to any writer's life, character, and works than this critic's tribute to Milton and Paradise Lost. Certainly it is an understatement to say that New England writers of this period found in the great Puritan the perfect ideal of man and poet.

The direct antithesis to this unqualified veneration occurs in the prejudiced assault against the man and poet unleashed by De Bow's Review, a Southern publication, in 1860. This bitter attack was part of a larger propaganda campaign conducted against the "Yankee abolitionists" of New England and their Puritan ancestors. One condemnatory article followed another in this year when war tension ran high with the final result that anything remotely connected with the Puritan sect or republicanism was sweepingly denounced in successive bursts of invective. The entire Protestant Reformation was branded as a "mad" movement, while in Cromwell's day, "all England, for a while, became demented."³⁴ Puritans and Independents from Elizabeth's reign to the days of Cotton Mather were attacked as fanatics, intolerant heretics, and subversives who would "overthrow the moral government of God." A typical statement follows:

...the English Puritans proper were among the very worst developments of human nature -

excelled by the French Jacobins only, in the extent of power achieved, and in rapidity and energy of action...Misanthropy, hypocrisy, diseased philanthropy, envy, hatred, fanaticism, and all the worst passions of the human heart, were the ruling characteristics of the English puritans; and they continue to be the ruling characteristics of New England Yankees, with the difference, that these have passed from the religious to the anti-religious extreme; and are now as much a people of infidels, as the French of 1793.³⁵

The Southern wrath denounced successively Cromwell, Bonaparte, Macaulay, and Cotton Mather in an almost endless stream of calumny. On the other hand, King Charles I and the old Cavalier cause received the highest veneration. Indeed, these writers professed to regard the controversy with the North as a mere continuation of the Great Rebellion and attributed the hostilities to the same cause — the fanatic jealousy of the Puritans and their New England descendants. The Southerners took pride in tracing their ancestry to the true Royalist stock.

In this larger framework it is easy to predict how Milton would fare at the hands of De Bow's Review. Contributors to this periodical deeply resented the adoption of the Puritan poet as a New England idol. The ensuing attack on his character and writings is easily as vehement as any made by his contemporary political antagonists. Milton's most persistent Southern enemy, George Fitzhugh, identified only as "from Virginia," first condemned the poet for "being ashamed to be an Englishman."³⁶ Unlike the great English poets Johnson, Byron, and Shakespeare,

Milton "foolishly tried to compete with the prophets of Judea, the poets and philosophers of Greece and Rome, and the medieval writers of romance, on their own ground." As a result, he states, since "the poet could not wholly eliminate his English notions, he sets his angels to firing cannon with as much skill as modern Chinese or Japanese." Thus would Fitzhugh deface the New England portrait of Milton as the great patriot of his country.

He continues his attack in more general terms, stating that most of Milton's poetry is a "monstrous deformity and abortion...highly artificial, conceited, affected, unnatural, and un-English." Almost the same terms used to describe the Puritans and Yankees are applied to Milton's writings. Fitzhugh notes that the "fanaticism and demagogism" of New England have made it fashionable to laud Milton since he was a Puritan, but nobody actually reads him, and "except for the first two books of Paradise Lost he is not worth reading."

When cant, fanaticism, and demagogism have cooled down, the tyrant over women and the apologist of regicides will have as few admirers as the poet. Bigots, schismatics, and radicals have so far feebly upheld his waning reputation. Without reputation themselves, their endorsement will no longer be honored.³⁷

In another article, ostensibly a review of the Idylls of the King, the same writer charges that Milton's tyrannical attitude towards women led him to treat "Mother Eve" no better than a "negro wench."³⁸ Later he launches into a tirade against the supernatural in literature. He dismisses A Midsummer Night's Dream as a "silly conceit, written

probably to please the crazy Puritans, who were just then appearing in England." Milton is naturally not excluded: He "was a Puritan himself, and being half-crazy on many subjects, no wonder he wrote his Comus — nobody reads it now. It is only fit to be read by crazy people."

Another article by Fitzhugh titled "Milton and Macaulay" finds two prime targets in the two "representative men — representatives alike of the ultra-liberal doctrines of the Puritans, Independents, and Infidels, and of the vulgar despotism of Cromwell."³⁹ He asserts that both writers represent a movement which "threatens to culminate in anarchy and free love." Firmly supporting Johnson's charge that Milton held a "Turkish contempt for females," he adds that the poet owed a debt of gratitude to his daughters which was heavier than that owed by any other father in history. But Milton treated them badly and forced them into marriages with "low, poor, ignorant men."

Cromwell was brutal in his nature, but like the brute he loved his offspring. Milton was lower than the brute; and we can find no epithet by which justly to characterize him.⁴⁰

The writer then attacks Milton's religious views, his "defence of polygamy," and his "base prostitution of the pen" in his prose works. "He played spaniel...under the despot Cromwell, as readily as he played criminal in attempting to justify the cold-blooded murdering of a mild sovereign, accomplished gentleman, and pious Christian, for such was Charles I." Macaulay's assertion that Milton was a "martyr to liberty" is contemptuously derided as an apology

for treason and murder. But that Macaulay should laud Milton's "virtues" is not surprising when it is realized that the Whig "considers always as virtuous what other men deem the basest of crimes."

Like Milton he was envious, jealous, and devoid of moral or religious principles, sentiment, or feeling. Like Milton, his love of liberty was a mere device to pull down all above him to his own level, and to oppress all below him. The instincts of the gentleman or Christian neither ever felt for a moment in their lives. They are wholly without the pale of honor, and have no title to notice except for their capacity for mischief.⁴¹

Fitzhugh later alludes to Paradise Lost and insists that Milton "pours his whole soul into his hero, Satan," because the poet's most ardent wish was that he might possess the characteristics he gave to the devil. He then asserts that Milton's writings must be condemned since they injuriously affect the "morals, religion, prosperity, and happiness of mankind." He reluctantly admits that Milton was a gifted man, but he misused his talents to "retard human morality."

He compares the poet to the Catholic priests of the "dark ages," who attempted to people heaven and earth and hell with a "brood of deities and devils, giants, monsters, witches, sorcerers, genii, ghosts, and hobgoblins - all claiming lineal descent from Holy Writ." The writer praises Byron's Cain for "brushing away these profane superstitions" which, he says, were deforming Christianity. He goes on to add that Milton's Archangel Michael becomes a ridiculous figure in the hands of the Puritan poet, while the Father and the Son "are treated with a familiarity which makes the

blood run cold." Thus he summarizes his opinion of the poem which in New England was esteemed next to Holy Scripture for religious piety:

We cannot quote from him, nor even refer to the many instances in which he thus sins, for in doing so we should, in part, indulge in his profanity and impiety. 'Paradise Lost' is the most profane, and in one passage at least, the most obscene book we ever read. Because an Arian, a polygamist, a hypocrite, perpetuates these impieties with a grim face and a canting voice, is he the less censurable? Certainly not. His gravity and affected piety increase his criminality, because they add efficiency to the poison which he distils.⁴²

According to its modern editor, De Bow's Review is the most important source material for a study of life and thought in the Old South from 1846 to the close of the Civil War.⁴³ Certainly if the opinions of this periodical were shared by its readers, Milton, because of his identification with Puritanism and liberal political views, was thoroughly detested in the Southern states in this period. If these attacks were meant to provoke replies from New England, however, they failed completely. There is no evidence that any writer even considered it necessary to answer Fitzhugh's most outrageous statements.⁴⁴

While Milton was being deified in Boston and blasphemed in New Orleans, British periodicals followed more diverse paths in this period. If the poet's name had become a shibboleth of party in the first quarter of the century when the French and American Revolutions were still a living memory to many, this attitude only slowly subsided after the Great Reform Bill, though the rankling thorn of Milton's republicanism apparently disturbed conservative organs like the Quarterly Review less as England moved into the Victorian Age with its emphasis on industrial progress at home and internal reform. But while the controversial tone became more subdued, the spirit of Macaulay through the Whig periodicals kept alive for a time the inspiring ideal of Milton's patriotism. Interest was still keen regarding the poet's life and character, but critics increasingly emphasized the poetry and Milton's great poetic genius. As the nineteenth century progressed, more and more critics turned to the great wealth of biographical material in their interpretation of Milton's poetry.

In 1830, The Mirror gave exalted praise to Milton's⁴⁵ poetry in a comparison of Milton and Klopstock. The article shows the extent to which panegyric can smother criticism under a blanket of vague adjectives and indiscriminately chosen hyperboles. The writer makes no attempt to distinguish particular "beauties," using the proposition that if Milton, the Divine Bard, produced the poem it was immediately entitled to the terms sublime, heavenly, and

magnificent. But this was a popular periodical dedicated to "literature, amusement, and instruction," and indicates less the critical trend of the period than the leech-like tenacity with which the familiar eighteenth century tags adhered to Milton's name.

In the following year, the radical Benthamite Westminster Review, always ready to praise Milton, considered L'Allegro and Il Penseroso as poems reflecting the sensitive and imaginative mind of the poet.⁴⁶ According to this writer, the companion poems show Milton's power to create an imaginative world to suit his prevailing mood. He says that both poems reveal the poet's capacity for happiness, "the only difference being that the one depicts a state of light-heartedness, and the other of sober-minded enjoyment...." In the same year this periodical quoted William Howitt's opinion of "On the Late Massacre at Piedmont," giving its full approval to that writer's high praise of the sonnet which shows the "burning exclamation of Milton's agonized and indignant spirit, as he beheld those sacred bulwarks of freedom for once violated by the disturbing demons of the earth; and the sound of his fiery and lamenting appeal to Heaven will be echoed in every generous soul to the end of time."⁴⁷

In an article in Fraser's Magazine (1834), Sir Egerton Brydges unearthed the Johnson controversy and found much to censure in that critic's statements on Paradise Lost.⁴⁸ He is puzzled by the "strange prejudice" which tried to "depress the higher classes of poetry"; he concludes that

Johnson lacked the imagination necessary to appreciate anything but "worldly wisdom," After examining at length Johnson's assertion that Milton suffered the indignity of corporal punishment at Cambridge, he admits on the strength of the epistle to Diodati that the charge may be true. But to Brydges, the punishment merely shows Milton's early love of liberty and his great rebellious personality — "these things form no grave charge, and could only be thought important in the humour of detraction and hate in which the biographer composed this Life." He states that Milton's Latin poems record "in the most beautiful colors" the poet's unblemished youth:

Here his studies, his pursuits, his amusements, and his feelings, are described with a glow which leaves no doubt of the sincerity of the picture; and it is such as forms a becoming prelude to the works of the mighty author of Paradise Lost.⁴⁹

The critic is obviously pleased to state that the Latin poems show no "republican sternness" or "Puritan severity." Contrary to Johnson's prejudiced statements, Milton had no "mean hatred of the great; but a contempt for the sordid and money-getting pursuits of life, for the coarse and clamorous amusements of the mob, for the distractions of noisy society...." Brydges dwells reverently on the "grand mind" of Milton, sustained as it was by serene self-confidence in his own great abilities. He cites the poet's friendship with the Countess of Derby and other persons "in the highest sphere of nobility" to prove that there was no trace of Puritan bigotry in his personality. Turning then to Comus, a poem for which no language is adequate to

describe "the copiousness and richness of its poetical beauties," he finds the best traits of Milton's personality revealed. Brydges's emphasis on Milton's early poems to illustrate the poet's character looks back, of course, to William Hayley's biography and the common Tory practice of excluding the Commonwealth period and ignoring Milton's Puritanism.

The Quarterly Review also showed interest in Milton's Latin poems at this time in connection with his later poetic style.⁵⁰ In examining the "Latin and artificial cast" of his poetry, an anonymous writer looks "with reverence on the vigorous and splendid antique mold which his whole mind and diction had assumed — Sampson moves so nobly in his fetters that we could scarcely wish to see him drop them." However, he believes that Milton's style resulted not from the Latin verses which he wrote in his youth, but from the Latin prose, "the serious occupation" of his later years.

It is the antagonist of Salmasius and the Latin Secretary of the Republic, not the elegiac poet, that is to be traced in the artificial collocation of words and the less colloquial idioms of the "Paradise Lost." The English poems which Milton wrote in his youth, the "Allegro" and "Penseroso" ...are in a much freer and more vernacular vein.⁵¹

This is an interesting variant of the later use of biography to explain the severity and unadorned dignity of Milton's blank verse in Samson Agonistes.

In 1838, the Edinburgh Review approached Paradise Lost from the historical standpoint.⁵² The writer attempts to relate the epic to the age in which it was written and to

find in the poem the dominant characteristics of the late seventeenth century. His praise for Milton, his period, and Paradise Lost is bestowed in identical terms of panegyric when he declares that in every case the "appearance of a great epic has been coincident with the period of the highest development of genius, and with the most masculine state of taste in the nation by which it was produced."

He asserts that Milton united in his great personality the "chivalrous recollections of the Elizabethan age with the enthusiasm of principle and intensity of will which characterize that of the Parliament...." The poet produced his epic by an imaginative impulse which caught up and fixed forever the "imposing and majestic character of that period..."

More specifically, he asserts that Milton brought into the councils of Pandemonium those very questions which concerned his contemporaries: "fixed fate, free will, and foreknowledge absolute." The passions which moved Satan, "revenge, immortal hate, and courage never to submit or yield," dominated his own mind as well as those of "half the members of the Long Parliament" during those controversial times. To this writer, the Puritan's scheme of Paradise itself is but a replica of his visionary ideals for the Church and the State. Milton's imagination was haunted by thoughts of the rights of man "uncircumscribed by government...until corrupted by the influence of society." In short, all of the significant issues of the day were impressed upon Milton's mind and were embodied in his

magnificent poem. Only a Whig periodical would offer these particular influences as being significant to Milton criticism.

It may be stated here that this writer's critical method agrees essentially with that of Chateaubriand; the French critic's Sketches of English Literature appeared in this year. Chateaubriand approached Milton on an historical-biographical basis. In the chapter titled "Milton Dans Le Paradis Perdu," he interprets the first two books of the epic by a type of political allegory which emphasizes Milton's republicanism as the key to understanding his treatment of Satan and his followers. Like the Edinburgh Reviewer, he saw in the rebellious figure of Satan the symbol of the "république aristocratique" which inspired both Milton and Cromwell. Chateaubriand goes to great lengths to show that Milton had no use for a "république d'égalité, une république plébéienne." The poet's ideal was an aristocratic republic governed by a perpetual grand council, with members ranked according to ability and community standing. The critic uses biographical evidence to show Milton's aristocratic nature:

Milton, ce fier républicain, était noble; il avait des armoiries: il portait un aigle d'argent éployé de sable à deux têtes de gueules, jambes et bec de sable: un aigle était, du moins pour le poète, des armes parlantes.⁵³

It is significant for his interpretation that Chateaubriand's liberal political views agreed in the main with Milton's, but more significant for this thesis is the fact

that the French critic and the Edinburgh Review should use the poet's republicanism not as a departure for a panegyric exemplum on patriotism but as a critical means of interpreting Paradise Lost.

Perhaps it is only a coincidence that the Tory Quarterly Review took the directly opposite position concerning Milton's later poems in its issue immediately following the Edinburgh Review article.⁵⁴ The writer states that Milton neither brought his own personality nor the times in which he lived into any of his later poems; he finds this "self-exclusion" the more remarkable since "no writer seems so completely cocentered in his own individual being." That this statement is but a rewording of the now familiar Tory practice of denying the importance of Milton's political activities is obvious when he launches forth into a description of the "passions, antipathies, the stern sectarianism" which inspired the "smaller poems" and the prose writings. He insists that in the major poems Milton could "annihilate himself" by "substituting a still higher inspiration" which clothed his own personality in a "kind and mysterious cloud."

He....almost confines his own individual appearance to the opening of the poem: having unclosed the gates of his visionary realm, he does not force us further as a guide, but leaves us again in the shadowy world he has created....Once indeed, again, and that in the passage of the deepest and most exciting pathos, he alludes to himself — to his exclusion from the light of day; but this too is during a conventional pause in the narrative at the commencement of a new book.⁵⁵

The writer finds this ability of self-annihilation the characteristic of the greatest poetry which he sharply

distinguishes from mere occasional poetry. Paradise Lost is like "music from an unseen instrument"; it gives the "highest notions of the wonderful powers of the human mind." He makes no reference to the Edinburgh Reviewer's use of Milton's political life to interpret the epic, but considering the great rivalry between the Whig and Tory organs, it is certainly plausible to think that this was a party-motivated reply.

In the next year, the Quarterly Review dealt again with the problem of the importance of Milton's "republican visions" to an appreciation of his poetry, but this time its approach was more direct and outspoken.⁵⁶ The periodic itch which seemed to move the Tories to create a "purified" Milton makes this writer deny not only that Milton's controversial works have any value whatsoever but that no one actually reads them but hapless reviewers. He begins in a moralizing tone reflecting an "I told you so attitude" as he speaks of the complete failure of Milton's republican dreams and the "solemn truths" made obvious by Cromwell's iron rule that popular insurrection leads directly, "we may almost write inevitably, to military despotism." He says that if one were to ask why Milton is loved and respected by mankind the answer must always rest on his poetic merits alone — "as the author of the exquisite juvenile poems, and of the 'Comus,' of which almost every thought is beauty, and every line music — it is as the retired and solemn bard of 'Samson Agonistes' and 'Paradise Lost' that the

memory of Milton is garnered up in the heart of his country — that his name is treasured in our profound and venerating love." Thus it is only where Milton did not "defile" himself in the "noise and mire" of controversy that he can be esteemed by his readers. And while this writer admits that no poet can wholly cut himself off from his age, he states that the more completely a writer can retire into himself the greater will be his achievement as a literary artist. Milton created his greatest works in the solemn retirement of his old age when he was not concerned with the "wild turmoil" surrounding Cromwell and his followers. The writer would believe that Milton forgot the trials and controversies through which he had passed and devoted himself wholly to his "lofty station" as a divine poet. This should be the policy of all writers:

By his fruits he will be known: if he has merely thrown the bitter apples of discord, fair to the sight but ashes to the taste, among the different ranks of society, he will perish forever, or leave but a name, remembered with shame and sorrow....⁵⁷

In 1838, a writer for The Mirror found Channing's essay on Milton in perfect agreement with his own views of the great poet.⁵⁸ Like the New England writer, he considers one of Milton's chief values to the nineteenth century to be his great example as an ideal man. He exalts Milton's character in terms which show that the New England type of veneration was still active in London periodicals. As a teacher of moral purity, unswerving devotion to duty, and the rewards of hard study, he says that Milton is without

equal; he entreats his readers to gain familiarity with the poet's works, to gain an insight into the poet's "spotless life" through Paradise Lost where "great talents and great virtues" mutually aided each other to produce each other to produce this supreme masterpiece. He states that Milton's poetry is always "healthful, bright, and vigorous, without gloom or dark pictures of life; for he knew that there is a power in the soul to transmute calamity into the occasion and nutriment of moral power and triumphant virtue." This quotation from Channing gives this writer's opinion of Milton's "prodigious greatness" of character.

The Edinburgh Review belatedly reviewed Channing's essay in 1839 and expressed somewhat surprised pleasure that Milton's liberal friends across the Atlantic were active in extending the poet's fame.⁵⁹ The reviewer commends Channing's sincere appreciation of the "prodigious merits of that great man, both as a poet and a citizen." Then, as if anticipating a Tory charge that Channing's (and his own) political and religious views dictated a "blind admiration" of the poet's works, he asserts that in spite of "the accident which makes the modern and ancient republican, the Unitarians of the nineteenth and the seventeenth century, the Independents who abhor church establishments on either side of the Atlantic, coincide in all their opinions, religious as well as political," that Channing's judgments on Milton's poetry are discriminating and unprejudiced. He believes that the American critic appreciated

the poems as a sober man of letters, not as a partisan of Milton's prose works — though Channing gives both their deserved high praise. He adds that occasionally Channing misplaces his praise of passages from Paradise Lost, but the reviewer can pardon this: "these little excesses, proceeding, as they do, from a laudable fondness for so noble and inspiring a theme."

In 1840, Chambers's Edinburgh Journal entered the field of periodicals who would pay homage to Milton's character and poetry.⁶⁰ In an article on English sonnet writers, the critic agrees with Wordsworth's statement that in Milton's hands the sonnet "became a trumpet," and goes on to say that Milton was probably the best sonnet writer in the English language. The article shows how far the wheel has turned from Johnson's opinion of Milton's sonnets "that of the best it can only be said that they are not bad." This writer finds Milton's severe correctness and "majestic melody" of style eminently suited for this poetic form, but more important for his success in the sonnet was the elevated character of his thoughts. The writer only regrets that the poet did not produce more of the "soul animating strains — alas too few!"

Two years later, a writer for the same periodical eulogized the "earnest and high tone of Milton's soul" and the firm faith which upheld him during the vicissitudes of the Restoration.⁶¹ He finds the poet's serene self-assurance during those "evil days" the most enduring character of his poetry. Milton's knowledge of his own powers as shown in

the openings of his great poems and his great hope for immortality as seen in the "fame is the spur" passage from Lycidas, led him to bear all difficulties with a steady, courageous confidence.

The spirit of Macaulay was revived by the liberal British Quarterly Review twenty years after the publication of the famous essay.⁶² Ostensibly reviewing the poems of John Keats and Leigh Hunt, this writer wastes little time in soaring into Whig panegyric on the seventeenth century Puritans and descending to the most bitter abuse of Restoration courtiers and writers. The former he describes as the destined representatives of "universal freedom through every succeeding age, " and though they found little opportunity to "dally with the muses," the Puritans were "embued with a fervor and a devotion which partook in a high degree of the poetical character." He dismisses the Restoration writers as a tribe of slaves who feverishly imitated the French and "deemed all writing profane that did not wear a court dress." As might be expected, such fanfare could only lead to the dramatic presentation of Milton; this writer does not disappoint his audience:

Amidst a crew so despicable, there still remained one spirit who stood true to nature and to virtue — a mighty relic of departed greatness, a remnant of that gigantic race which had perished in the revolutionary flood.⁶³

He then delineates at close range a portrait of Milton in his old age, blind and persecuted, but still possessing his great intellect and his sublime imagination. He states that

Milton produced Paradise Lost to redeem his country, "if not from the despotism by which its liberties were crushed," clearly impossible to a "mighty relic," at least from the false, foreign literary taste which was opposed to nature itself. He says that Milton is visible proof that "the highest mental culture, and the severest intellectual discipline, are not unpropitious to the grandest efforts of the imagination."

He asks rhetorically, "Why dwell on the wonders of Paradise Lost?" He then proceeds to do this very thing, extending a description of the "wonders" into an exalted tribute to Milton's supreme genius. But to praise Milton, he concludes, to extoll his "visions" and his poetic powers in the great epic has become the "very cant of criticism." Like Channing, Emerson, Macaulay, and others he gains from Milton's poetry the "strength and confidence" that only the Puritan poet could give from his own great spiritual resources.

Though entering the lists of Milton's ardent defenders late, it would seem that the British Quarterly Review tried to redeem its tardiness by the strength and vigor of its championship of the Puritan poet. In 1849, the appearance of St. John's edition of the prose works gave the reviewer an opportunity to defend Milton's character and his religious and political views.⁶⁴ He is not concerned with the poetry, however, as if taking his cue from the statement of the previous year that to praise Paradise Lost had become mere

critical cant. This was obviously not his attitude towards Milton's character. Milton's relations with Cromwell and his contributions to the cause of English liberty are investigated at some length; the reviewer concludes that Milton is England's greatest poet and that he served the country's greatest ruler, Cromwell, with an unselfish devotion to truth and freedom.

He formulates an interesting picture of Milton's personal character which closely resembles the earlier Whig stereotype. He attributes to Milton the highest moral principles together with unswerving devotion to the cause of justice; in his character were blended "stately elevation and severe purity." "His life was indeed a true poem; or it might be compared to an anthem on his own favorite organ — high-toned, solemn, and majestic." While regretting that Milton did not possess "more of the sweetness and gentleness that ought to mark a Christian," he adds that this would only have made him perfect.

It is enough for his eulogy to say, that with a genius such as has never been surpassed, and with attainments which have seldom been equalled, he combined the loftiest devotion with the most inflexible integrity. He stands before us as the type of Puritanism, in its noblest development, retaining all its stern virtue and passionate devotion, but without its coarseness, its intolerance, or its stoicism.⁶⁷

Here Milton's Puritanism carries no derogatory connotations; the critic carefully distinguishes between "ordinary" Puritanism and the lofty Miltonic variety.

John Wilson, the irrepressible "Christopher North" of

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, called Milton a "miserable politician"; but he did not hesitate to praise the poetic genius which produced Paradise Lost.⁶⁶ To this Tory critic, Milton was a Christian theologian who looked upon himself as a "missioned teacher to men" through his poetry. Wilson considers Paradise Lost a depository, as it were, for Milton's life-long studies; into the poem the poet poured all the "soul-wealth hoarded in words" which separated his day from the age of Homer. He notes that Milton's poetic style is like no other; often Paradise Lost shows a severe simplicity, but Milton used all antecedent literature to his advantage without becoming an imitator in any sense of the word. According to Wilson, the style is a direct representation of the poet's character: "Lofty, capacious, acute, luminous, thoroughly disciplined, ratiocinative powers wonderfully blend their action with an imagination of the most delicate and profound sensibility to the beautiful and of a sublimity that no theme can excel."⁶⁷ Considering Wilson's extreme dislike of Milton's republicanism, it appears that he formed, as definitely as Johnson, both a personal and a literary character for the poet.

As Chateaubriand and the Edinburgh Review had done earlier, a writer for Hoar's Instructor (1853) attempted to assess the importance of the Commonwealth period to Milton's later poetry.⁶⁸ He states with certainty that it would not have been possible for Milton to have produced Paradise Lost if he had been content to sit on the sidelines

and watch with a "stoical eye" the struggles of his countrymen. This writer disagrees with the Tory assertion that a poet should retire to quiet meditation and study as preparation for producing a great poem. Rather than harming or subduing his poetic genius, Milton's controversial years were an essential preparatory period for his great creative effort. He compares Milton to Byron in this respect, for as Cain and Manfred would have remained unwritten were it not for their author's misanthropy and emotional disturbance, so Milton's great epic would have remained a dream if he had not waged his war with "tyranny in the church and state."

Milton's great epic was the natural result and the sublimated reflection of his life and times. To the choice of such a subject as the one therein presented, he would in no small degree be impelled by his deep interest in the conflict that was raging over the land, and of which he had been no inactive spectator.⁶⁹

The writer interprets Satan as an allegorical figure representing "the evil spirit of tyranny that was then stalking abroad," whereby he means the new government of King Charles II and the reestablished Church of England. In this view, he states that Milton intended to show through Satan's downfall that tyranny, though preceded by a period of power, must inevitably be overthrown — a great lesson for the "courtly and priestly tyrants" who might read Paradise Lost and see their own future doom.

Though clearly an almost impossible task, it seems that this writer tried bravely to exceed all predecessors in his panegyric on Milton's character: The poet came

closer to being the ideal man in "roundness and entireness of being" than any other man in history. Although he lacked the subtlety, insight into human character, and dramatic talent of Shakespeare, he possessed instead a more reverential spirit — "a loftier mould of mind." The writer concludes that the Puritan poet by his combination of great character and versatile power, and especially by the tremendous struggles he underwent previous to writing his greatest poetry, must stand apart from all other poets in ancient or modern times.

The British Quarterly Review warmly received the first volume of Masson's Life of Milton (1859) and agreed with that scholar's interpretation of Milton's character.⁷⁰ Since the first volume dealt only with Milton's early career, the reviewer confined himself to that period and excluded politics from his article. Several of Masson's main points he considers at length: Milton's austerity and gravity, his lack of deep human love, and the natural purity of his thoughts and conduct. The reviewer believes that Milton's habitual seriousness and his obvious lack of humor naturally affected his choice of poetic subjects and his subsequent treatment of them, but he does not state that this is a fault. To be sure, that austerity of mind which excluded human passion and love from his poetry marks him off from other poets, but it resulted in a "beauty of a purer essence than that of mere earth." Although there is no love in his poems, Milton was capable

of treating the diviner feelings, the spiritual side of man and his relations with God, though never the more common types of human emotion. It may be noted that the reviewer does not mention the sonnet "On His Deceased Wife" or the scenes in Paradise between Adam and Eve; presumably he would consider these of an unearthly, spiritual nature.

To the reviewer, Milton's nickname at Cambridge, the "Lady" of Christ's College, gives the key to his life and poetry. His classmates keenly observed that innate purity which guided the poet's entire life and affected all of his poetry. The writer states that Milton's intense love of chastity and virtue imparted to his poems a "kind of divine beauty and spiritual sweetness for which no parallel can be found amongst the greatest of ancient or modern poets."

An interesting variation of this interpretation occurs in the North British Review's notice of Masson in the same year.⁷¹ The writer begins rather ominously for this period when veneration for Milton ran high when he refers to a "feeling which has been gaining ground" for some time that "Milton's reputation as a poet has been relatively higher than is justified by his works." He points out that Cary's translation of Dante was preferred by Ruskin to Paradise Lost and that Ruskin's statement of this fact did not evoke the "astonishment, wrath, or ridicule" which it formerly would have received. He adds that if Milton's reputation seems to have suffered it is because of the

inferiority of the subject matter, in spite of the grandeur of the language: "...in Milton's poetry we are far less interested by what he says, than by his manner of saying it." He states that the poet's strength lay in his ability to achieve magnificent poetic effects from material of "no very great moral, intellectual, or passionate depth." He speaks of the inferiority of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained as religious poems, declaring that in comparison with Bunyan's "passionate expression of a spiritual truth" Milton's verse is "superficial, cold, and pagan...." Again, on the point of a sublime conception of hell and heaven, Milton's poetry cannot even be compared with Dante's. To this reviewer, then, Milton's great poetic talent was limited to the "ravishing melody" of his verses; only in the harmonious effects of blank verse does he surpass other poets.

After dispensing with Milton's thought and subject matter, the reviewer turns to Masson's view of the poet's personal character. The writer agrees that moral and intellectual pride were important components of the personality, but he points out that Masson's chief fault was his failure to brand these traits as "evil." But evil they are to this reviewer; it was Milton's supreme egotism, granted even by Johnson as essential to the production of Paradise Lost, which exerted a "chilling and narrowing effect upon his feelings, his opinions, and his poetry." Thus the limitations of Milton's thought and the inferiority of his poetry resulted from this one tragic flaw. Here there is

no mention of the "unearthly" nature of Milton's poetry or of the transcendent purity of his thought and conduct which colored everything that he wrote. The writer moves on to notice Milton's lack of humor and his constant attempts at self-improvement as other reasons for his deficiencies as a poet. He says that both qualities set him apart from other men, narrowed his outlook to the circumference of his own ego, and helped produce that poetry which, though magnificently harmonious, was inevitably cold, narrow, and superficial. It may be noted here that such reactions as this to Masson's Life well illustrate Thorpe's thesis that by this time the decline of the Miltonic tradition was under way.⁷²

Seven years before the publication of Emerson's article on Milton in the North American Review (1838), Thomas Carlyle had found the Puritan poet too self-conscious to be admitted to the highest ranks of genius;⁷³ he maintained this opinion in 1840 when he selected Shakespeare and Dante as his examples of the hero as poet.⁷⁴ In his lectures on English literature delivered in 1838, Carlyle set forth his most extended views of Milton's character and poetry, and, occurring as they do in the same year as Emerson's article, an interesting contrast is seen in the very different views of the two great nineteenth century writers.⁷⁵ Although both excluded the Puritan poet from their galleries of great men in history, it is much easier to see why Carlyle did so than Emerson.

Since his lectures were based on an historical approach, Carlyle neatly tagged Milton as the summation of Shakespeare and John Knox, meaning that he was partly the poet and partly the religious philosopher. Lest this appear as a high compliment however, he immediately adds that Milton, unlike Shakespeare, was completely sectarian in all his interests. He asserts that the poet's outlook on life was narrow and sorely limited; Milton lacks the "universality of mind" that marks Shakespeare's writings - the ability to understand and sympathize with all humanity or what modern psychologists call "empathy." This rigid narrowness not only marks but mars Milton's poetry; "it

does not come out of the heart of things..." He notes that Paradise Lost is an ambitious poem, "a great picture painted on a huge canvas," but it does not show us deep into human nature. This fault he lays to Milton's character; he was too narrow and polemical. This is certainly very different from Emerson's view of Milton as an ideal man of heroic stature whose life was a "true poem." It may be noted too that the New Englander valued Milton for the very reason that Carlyle did not — i.e., the poet's extremely subjective nature. As mentioned above, Carlyle found this mere self-consciousness; Emerson delighted in seeing the man behind the poetry.

Carlyle describes all of Milton's characters as lifeless, and he attributes this fault also to the poet's narrow personality. Adam and Eve, he says, are beautiful but cold statues, for the poet's sympathies were with things rather than with people. He loved the "scenery and phenomena of nature, the trim gardens, the burning lake; but as for the phenomena of the mind, he was not able to see them." Carlyle ends with a statement carrying strong implications regarding Milton's character. He says that the poet's only delineation of the mind is Satan, and the fallen angel represents Milton's own character — "the black side of it."⁷⁶

Taking an approach entirely different to Carlyle's, Thomas De Quincey put the question "Who and what is Milton?" to the readers of Blackwood's Magazine in 1839 and then

proceeded to give his now famous answer:

Milton is not an author amongst authors, not a poet amongst poets, but a power amongst powers; and the 'Paradise Lost' is not a book amongst books, not a poem amongst poems, but a central force amongst forces.⁷⁷

De Quincey outlines the difference between "books" and "powers" in literature in framing his critical approach to Milton. He says that literature for the most part is composed of books, however excellent of their kind, which are not indispensable and whose place would eventually be filled in the human tradition if they had never been written by their original authors. That is, if Samuel Butler had never produced Hudibras some other author in Butler's time or in a later period would have performed the task and written a comparable work. These are books. The "powers" of literature, on the other hand, are an entirely different matter. As one of the prime powers Milton occupies a unique position in the English literary tradition for the very reason that he is completely irreplaceable. De Quincey's approach to the poetry is clearly based on his idea of the man when he says:

If the man had failed, the power would have failed. In that mode of power which he wielded the function was exhausted in the man, the species [Milton's type of poetry] was identified with the individual, the poetry was incarnated in the poet.⁷⁸

This power which is the crux of De Quincey's criticism of Paradise Lost and his interpretation of Milton's character as well (the two are somewhat blended) becomes

a reworking of the familiar eighteenth century concept of the Miltonic sublime, but in his words it is a "synthesis between man and nature." He states that this "ethico-physical sublime" inheres always in the greatest poetry; the only human composition which is completely sublime — "equally by its conception and by its execution" — is Paradise Lost. "In Milton only, first and last, is the power of the sublime revealed.... In Milton only does this great agency blaze up and glow as a furnace kept up to a white heat, without suspicion of collapse." Ten years later, De Quincey restated his idea of power in connection with Paradise Lost as a "deep sympathy with truth." At that time he gave his greatest praise to the poem and its author:

What do you learn from 'Paradise Lost'?
 Nothing at all. What do you learn from a
 cookery book? Something new, something
 that you did not know before, in every
 paragraph. But would you therefore put
 the wretched cookery-book on a higher
 level of estimation than the divine poem?
 What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge,
 of which a million separate items are still
 but a million advancing steps on the same
 earthly level; what you owe is power — that
 is exercise and expansion to your own latent
 capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where
 every pulse and each separate impulse is a
 step upwards, a step ascending as upon a
 Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious
 attitudes above earth.⁷⁹

It is important to note that both ideas of power, as "sympathy between man and nature" or "sympathy with truth" presuppose an approach to the poetry through the mind or the intellectual and emotional capacity of the author. That De Quincey's method closely resembles

Johnson's idea of the literary character is evident, but in Milton's case the critics differ on one point. According to De Quincey, Milton possessed an harmonious grandeur of mind which infused into his poetry the most intense human passion. This "concentrated fire" inherent, apparently, in the poet's psychological make-up, guaranteed by a sort of cause-effect relationship a completely harmonious artistic product. As he says, "the passion becomes a law to itself, and will not receive into connexion with itself any parts...deficient in harmony..." On this basis De Quincey impatiently refutes Addison's statement that Paradise Lost suffers from the poet's excessive display of his learning and Johnson's charge that Milton blended Pagan and Christian ideas in his epic.

Great as the critic's opinion is of Paradise Lost, his estimate of Milton's moral and intellectual character equals it on all points. He states that the poet's intellect was marked by a "solitary grandeur" which showed nothing of the extensive discursiveness of Shakespeare's thought; for "the motions of his mind were slow, solemn, sequacious, like those of the planets..." Milton could not bring all things into his own intellectual sphere; "repulsion" was the characteristic of his mind as he stood apart in unapproachable grandeur. His great intellect demanded the "infusion" of Latin, Greek, and Hebraic diction into his poetry, for "without such aids he would have had

no proper element in which to move his wings," but there was always full justification for his use of foreign idioms. De Quincey goes on to say that Milton really created a peculiar language of his own, and this lofty style of expression was necessary to support his "majestic style of thinking." The final result as embodied in Paradise Lost is a "transcendent answer to all adverse criticism."⁸⁰ Thus the critic's idea of Milton as "one column of the national grandeur" and a magnificent model for all posterity is the solid base on which his literary criticism rests. De Quincey is not concerned with explicit details of Milton's life, nor is he interested in his political or religious views to any great extent. His approach is chiefly psychological in the emphasis on Milton's intellect, imagination, passionate intensity, and moral grandeur — the combined qualities which together produced Paradise Lost.

Henry Hallam's criticism of Milton's poetry also occurred in 1839, in his Introduction to the Literature of Europe. This critic used Milton's "religious solemnity" as the touchstone of his approach to the poetry.⁸¹ He did not, however, interpret Samson Agonistes by explicit biographical detail as many later critics were to do, but regarded the drama as "the ebb of a mighty tide," essentially a poem reflecting Milton's old age. It became common critical practice for Victorian critics to cite the lack of "poetical"

language in Samson, as compared with Paradise Lost or the earlier poems, as direct evidence of Milton's increasing austerity of temperament as he grew older. Hallam's comment on this point carries no derogatory connotations, however, for he still finds the "uncommon grandeur" and the "vigour of thought" which were inseparable from Milton's genius. The lack of lyric lightness and musical effects in both Samson and Paradise Regained show, not an artistic fault, but an inevitable development due to the essential character of the man.

Hallam compares Milton with Dante on the point of subjective elements in the poetry and asserts that Milton's genius, though very subjective, was less so than Dante's. Hallam does not fully approve of Milton's treatment of celestial personages, and he ascribes his "not wholly pleasing" depiction of God to the poet's "theological bias towards anthropomorphism."⁸² More important in his criticism of Paradise Lost is his statement that Milton's "uniform seriousness," and aspect of the "religious solemnity" noted above, colored all of his poetry and gave it a uniform stately dignity. Another subjective element he names is the poet's preference for argumentative speech — indeed, for any kind of argument. As we have seen, Hazlitt noted this characteristic of Milton's poetry and ascribed it to the controversial nature of his age. Hallam says that this quality is so predominant that even the "brighter colouring" of the later poems reveals only the "smile of a

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pensive mind..." Even in the descriptions of Paradise Lost and in other passages where "some other poets would indulge a little in voluptuousness," Milton's habitual solemnity is never lost. Indeed, Hallam adds that some lines in the epic are "too plain" and their gravity makes them even worse. But this is the harshest stricture that he makes against the poem, and it loses its force under the overall great praise he gives it. He declares that Paradise Lost has the finest subject ever chosen for an epic poem, and he finds it naturally suitable to the temper and genius of Milton. He judges Satan as "the first effort of Milton's genius," but he also considers the characters of Adam and Eve admirable in every respect. Hallam makes a point of refuting the view of some critics that Milton expressed his contempt for women in his treatment of Eve; like Addison, he considers her "exquisitely drawn." This is consistent with his overall approach to the poet: to interpret Milton's character as grave and serious without including Johnson's stigmas of moroseness and bitterness. We shall see that later critics did follow Johnson in using the poet's lack of humor as an index to his "habitual gloom."

An interesting use of biographical material occurs in Hallam's agreement with Coleridge that Milton is "not a picturesque but a musical poet." This side of his talent he relates to two causes: the poet's blindness and his residence

in a city. Milton can describe visible objects, he says, and often with great power, but he lacks the "circumstantial exactness of observation" which Spenser and Dante possessed. His blindness made necessary his reliance on memory and literary knowledge, while his natural descriptions reflect his lack of direct contact with natural scenery. Hallam considers that this led to Milton's "rather too ostentatious display of learning." Paradise Lost also reveals his preference for sounds rather than visual imagery: "the sense of vision delighted his imagination, but that of sound wrapped his whole soul in ecstasy."⁸³ Yet all the strictures he makes on the poetry he dismisses as "trifling faults" which should be regarded as "the necessary adjuncts of the qualities we most admire, and idiosyncracies of a mighty genius." Milton's poetry may lack grace and ease; but its power and elevation, the products of his "mighty genius," render all such deficiencies unimportant.

Henry Stebbing's remarks on Milton (1843) deserve notice here not only for the biographical nature of the literary criticism but as an example of how the worshipful attitude towards Milton's character was increasingly subordinated to the appreciation of his artistry.⁸⁴ In Stebbing's view, Milton was an admirable man who lacked the "ordinary passions" or purposely subdued them. The poet was calm and tranquil even in his childhood, and these aspects of his temperament mounted to sternness and a "severe assertion of authority" in his later life. The

writer asserts that Milton never knew "domestic joy" in his marital relations; indeed, he infers that the poet was incapable of human love. Even his friendships, though "sincere and constant" were characterized by the "classical precision" of his letters, and he "seemed to find a greater relish in the intercourse, when the learned spirit of antiquity assisted it." He says that this lack of ordinary human warmth and love can be observed in the poetry which shows the coldness with which Milton looked upon objects of "sanctity and beauty." He traces this to his habitual austerity:

There are no signs of that rich deep stream of inner feeling which memory calls up in gentle breasts. We hear him uttering no lament over things which have passed away, because they were associated with some home-thought, or old familiar object....when his heart warmed at any recollection of the past, it was his admiration, not his sympathy, that was awakened.⁸⁵

Only one feeling, he adds, stirred Milton's capacity for deep emotion — his intense love of freedom which he still held in his old age when every other interest had been subdued.

Stebbing accounts for Paradise Lost as a creative expression of Milton's entire life, partly inspired by "celestial visitants in his lonely chamber," partly by the cumulative effect of his imagination which conceived and shaped the subject not in one flash of genius, but over a long period of years, even during the controversial days of the Great Rebellion. He places Milton with the

highest order of poets, those raised by a "mysterious elevation of Nature" or a "divine gift of clear intellectual vision" above other writers. He says that it was inevitable that Milton's epic was produced in his declining years since the poet's "visions" could not be subdued by the waywardness of youth:

Many of its most brilliant passages might have been produced in earlier years, but it could only be when the waywardness of thought was subdued, and the human spirit stood free from temporal hopes and wishes, that it could bear such a weight of glory, that it could look long and steadily upon the majestic vision with which it was encompassed.⁸⁶

He partly nullifies this praise, however, when, in naming Milton the most learned of poets, he wonders if the poet's great knowledge, as seen in his later poems, has not "mastered thought instead of being its auxiliary." In line with this, he decides that the true characteristic of Milton's poetic genius are best seen in his early poems which are not overlaid with acquired knowledge. "In them we see the love of truth, the creative imagination, and the power of language, which form the features of his subsequent productions." Milton sought his wisdom in books since "the fashion of the times was not in favor of original thinking..." He thinks that this partly explains the subjection of "passion, thought, and feeling" to memory. Stebbing concludes that Milton's lack of passion was the "only element which was wanting to the perfection of his poetic character." The imagination was great, but it was

cut off from emotion; hence, the "grandeur but coldness of his genius — the distinctness and reality of his creations — the cramped scholasticism of his philosophy."

That Milton should become a utilitarian in the period when John Stuart Mill's writings were finding wide acceptance in England is not surprising when we note that many nineteenth century political radicals, always friendly to the poet, took up the Utilitarian cause. J. A. St. John, radical journalist and literary critic, edited Milton's prose in 1848 and attempted to bring the Puritan poet into his own sect by pointing out the contemporary value of his ideas on government and social reform.⁸⁷ St. John interprets Milton's writings as the off-spring of his utilitarian sympathies:

The spirit of our age has often been described, and sometimes without any design of complimenting it, as the spirit of utility; and by this I profess, in the present case, to be actuated. Utility is my object [i.e., in editing the prose works] but under this term I include whatever can benefit the life of man, public or private.... Milton was pre-eminently a utilitarian. In all he wrote he had a view to the public good....⁸⁸

In his attempt to exonerate Milton's political career from the charges of Johnson and other Tories, St. John echoes the views of Symmons and Macaulay. Certainly he brings no new arguments to his thesis that Milton was the inspiring example of ardent patriotism. He ridicules the idea that Milton's mind was "airy and dream-fed" as Blunt and other Quarterly Reviewers maintained, and he asserts with obvious pleasure that the poet's intellectual and moral qualities

were so great that he could not with good conscience refrain from participating in the defence of freedom during the Great Rebellion. St. John equates the poet with the patriotic citizen to produce a towering figure uniting the greatest moral and intellectual capacities.

Despite his emphasis on Milton's prose writings and political conduct, St. John takes opportunity to bestow homage on his power as a poet, but when treated by this radical critic, the poetry becomes inextricably related to politics. He dogmatically states that the secluded life prevents the production of the greatest poetry, insisting that the poet must mingle in the affairs of the world, and concluding that Milton's political activities were necessary preparation for his writing Paradise Lost. Further, he states that it is the epic poet's business to treat "the momentous transactions of peace and war, seditions, tumults, fierce and uncouth struggles for freedom, which nations, long injured and oppressed, make at length when their burdens have become intolerable." He finds in Milton's epic "evident traces" of the turbulent times through which the poet passed in his great battle for freedom.

...an irrepressible love of independence, a mind thrown by an unexampled political catastrophe into that condition in which its most hidden and secret powers, like the fountains of that great deep, were broken up, and fiercely agitated and impelled, as by a hurricane, to pour all their dazzling and tumultuous waters into the broad channel of poetry. Such circumstances, indeed, are not inspiration, or they would operate on every breast alike; but over

minds fitly disposed they sweep as over a lyre, calling forth divinest music.⁸⁹

That St. John uses Milton's "republican utilitarianism" as the sole guiding light to his approach to Paradise Lost obviously limits the scope of his criticism. The critic's own political prejudices are everywhere evident. He values Milton's epic more as the natural progeny of his controversial years than as a literary work of art.

His treatment of all the prose tracts is conducted, as he says, "tremblingly and reverently," but his greatest praise is given the divorce treatises which he interprets as the poet's sincere and impassioned statement of his unhappy marriage to Mary Powell. Milton's first wife fares badly at the hands of this critic; in one instance he calls her "worthless" and his picture of her family home closely resembles Macaulay's version of the Restoration:

....in one short month after their marriage the lady became tired of the unriotous tranquillity of his house, and obtained his permission to return to her father's; where, instead of the modest cheerfulness, the plain repasts, the religious and happy homeliness of a philosophic dwelling, she was surrounded by the brawling soldiers of the king's army, the most dissolute, depraved, and godless crew that ever disturbed the peace of civil society.⁹⁰

According to St. John, Milton brought this unhappy episode of his domestic life into Paradise Lost when Adam admonishes Eve after the fall. Mary Powell served as the perfect model for Adam's guilty but eventually submissive mate. He then postulates that the divorce tracts first suggested to Milton the subject for Paradise Lost, a supposition which

contradicts the earlier statement that Milton's "utilitarianism" prompted all of his writings.

If St. John unreservedly praised everything about Milton, George Gilfillan, writing in the next year (1849), was equally unstinting in the tribute he brought to the memory of the "prince of modern men."⁹¹ More representative of the period than St. John, this writer is less concerned with politics than with Milton's personal character and poetry. To be sure, he pays due homage to Milton's patriotism, comparing him in the Restoration era to Abdiel, the "dreadless angel," among Satan's crew. His opinion of Milton as a man can best be seen in the advice he gives to his reader to imitate Milton in every aspect — "the patriotism, the sincerity, the manliness, the purity, and the piety of his character" — in short, the entire life of the poet affords a worthy ideal towards which men should strive.⁹² He interprets Milton as "intensely the man of his time," although far above it in all respects. This is no small praise, for it was "an age attempting, with sincere, strong, though baffled endeavour, to be earnest, holy, and heroic." When Gilfillan speaks of the Puritan "martyrdom" his panegyric equals that of any New England writer.

Gilfillan examines the poetry briefly but reverently. He states that by making a "climactic arrangement" of Milton's poetical works it is possible to trace a complete history of the man. In the sonnets, as "in the compass of

a crown-piece," he discovers the man's essential traits: "his gravity, his chaste and chary expression, his holy purpose, and the lofty and solitary character of his soul."⁹³

The companion poems and Lycidas he regards as the finest and purest expressions of Milton's youth: "To say that Lycidas is beautiful, is to say that a star or rose is beautiful."

Conceive the finest and purest graces of the Pagan mythology culled and mingled, with modest yet daring hand, among the roses of Sharon and the lilies of the valley — conceive the waters of Castalia sprinkled on the flowers which grow in the garden of God — and you have a faint conception of what Lycidas means to do.⁹⁴

Turning then to the Nativity Ode, Gilfillan pronounces it one "which might have been sung by the angelic host on the plains of Bethlehem, and rehearsed by the shepherds in the ears of the Infant God." The Ode reveals Milton's "awful reverence and joy," his ecstatic religious fervor and his sublime purity.

He examines Samson Agonistes strictly from the biographical standpoint. Milton chose the subject from the striking resemblance of his situation to the Hebrew champion's. Their destinies were the same: both became blind in the service of their country and felt the intense grief of blasted hopes and ideals. He states that Milton used Samson as a channel through which to pour out "his old complaint, but more in anger than in sorrow..." Samson is but a "hard and Hebrew shape of Milton." The poem, through its lack of visual imagery, reflects the poet's

blindness; consequently, it is a "naked and gloomy poem," the passionate outburst of the poet's old age in the Restoration.

Against Samson, he places Comus, the "growth and bloom" of Milton's spotless youth. In the masque, Milton's young genius runs wild with youthful fancy and his love of natural beauty. "It is rather a dream than a drama — such a dream as might have been passing across the fine features of the young Milton, as he lay asleep in Italy."

After giving brief notice and high praise to Paradise Regained, Gilfillan examines Paradise Lost — "the greatest work of Milton's genius." His estimate of the epic can only be given in his own words:

It is the tower of Babel, the top of which did not, indeed, reach unto heaven, but did certainly surpass all the other structures then upon earth. It stands alone, unequalled — Man's Mountain. It is a Samson throw, to reach which, in our degenerate days, no one need aspire.⁹⁵

Like the other poems, Paradise Lost is viewed through Gilfillan's opinion of Milton's character. He interprets the epic as the "illuminated creed" of a "solitary, independent, daring, yet devout man," and he adds that the admiration given it has been marked by a "stupefied and silent amazement" at the poet's genius. Certainly all of Gilfillan's comments on the poems refer back to the man behind the poem. Milton's life was a "great epic itself.... he acted as well as wrote an epic complete in all its parts — high, grave, sustained, majestic." The characteristics of the personality were indelibly pressed upon the

poetry. The character of Adam gives us the poet in his youth, "ere yet the cares of life had ploughed his forehead or quenched his serene eyes," while Eve is not "the ghost of Mary Powell" but Milton's lifelong dream of what a woman should be. To Gilfillan, Paradise Lost is the monument which preserves, whole and intact, the great character of its author.

Although Walter Savage Landor's Milton criticism was scattered over a twenty year period, he held a remarkably consistent opinion of Milton's character and poetry during that time. Like De Quincey, his criticism centered about the nobility of Milton's genius, but Landor is much more prone to point out defects in the man and poetry, small as they may seem in comparison with his overall estimate:

It may be doubted whether the Creator ever created one altogether so great; taking into our view at once (as much indeed as can at once be taken into it) his manly virtues, his superhuman genius, his zeal for truth, for true piety, true freedom, his eloquence in displaying it, his contempt of personal power, his glory and exultation in his country's.⁹⁸

To find room for blemish in this portrait may seem impossible, but Landor adds some unpleasant traits to Milton's personal character which distinguish this critic from those idolators who believed the poet to be perfection personified. Thus he acknowledges that Milton had a natural tendency towards moroseness and severity, relieved somewhat by his love of poetry and music, but undeniably seen in his prose works. He adds that Milton's manner towards

others was habitually grave and austere, though in one of the Imaginary Conversations, Marvell assures Milton that he was "never uncongential."⁹⁷ But elsewhere, Landor himself says that there is "nothing less pleasant than the smile of Milton,"⁹⁸ adding later than soon after writing Comus the "laughter of Milton assumed a wry, puritanical cast."⁹⁹ Only rarely, however, does Landor use the adverse traits of character in his criticism of the poetry. He does state that Milton's Satan "savours a little of the Puritan" in Paradise Regained. Sometimes Milton was pedantic in his poems, being too fond of showing what he had read..."This was an error since the things Milton took from others were "always much worse than his own."¹⁰⁰ He notes that in Comus "the scholar in the gown stood in the poet's way." The masque is too scholastic, reminiscent of a "boy talking like a philosopher."¹⁰¹ He thinks that Milton has "strange hallucinations of ear" when he wrote Paradise Regained, an incongruous situation for the poet who excelled all others in the "science and display of harmony."¹⁰² Landor finds the action of Paradise Lost uninteresting, the theology unpleasant, and the explicit moral tedious and dull. But in spite of Milton's unpleasant personal traits and the critic's dislike of his subject matter Landor could make the following statement:

Averse as I am to everything relating to theology, and especially to the view of it thrown open by this poem, I recur to it incessantly as the noblest specimen in the

world of eloquence, harmony and genius.¹⁰³

Landor was one of the first critics who separated Milton's manner of expression from his subject matter, a dichotomy which continued through the century.¹⁰⁴

David Masson's monumental Life of Milton, published at intervals from 1859 to 1881, more than any other work made popular the view of Milton as the Puritan poet and influenced succeeding critics with this interpretation for the next fifty years.¹⁰⁵ As we have seen, New England writers before Masson, as well as some English critics, had noted Milton's "Puritan side" and often in laudatory terms connoting firm morality, religious fervor, and high seriousness. Some writers like Emerson made Milton a "Puritan with a difference" in order to lift him above what they considered the unfavorable characteristics of the sect, such as fanaticism, narrow-mindedness, cold austerity. Before Masson's first volume appeared in 1859, Milton's Puritanism was merely mentioned or noted at some length by writers who especially admired the Puritans, but they did not often emphasize it as the focal point in their interpretations of the poet's character and works. It was Masson who brought Milton's Puritanism to the front with his highly influential biography. Masson believed that Milton's connection with Puritanism considerably raised the stature of both. He concludes his sixth volume with the statement that only "total ignorance" would try to "rob English Puritanism of Milton, or Milton of his title

to be remembered as the genius of Puritan England."

Although Milton shared with the Puritans his strong moral principles and his firm religious faith, Masson's interpretation of his personal character gives to the poet certain traits not necessarily derived from his Puritan association. It may be pointed out here that Masson gave his views of Milton's personality as early as 1852 in a North British Review article and carried the same opinions into the great Life.¹⁰⁶ He consistently attributed to the poet these characteristics: deep and habitual seriousness, pride, austerity, intolerance, and lack of humor. In the periodical article, he asserts that Coleridge's theory of the poetical character as "distinguished by a predominance of sensibility over principle, an excess of the spiritual over the moral part of man," was directly contradicted by Milton. He says that Milton's own words — a "certain reservedness of natural disposition, and a moral discipline learnt out of the noblest philosophy" — aptly summarize his essential traits. Never did Milton exhibit a nature "built on quicksands, an organization of nerve languid or tempestuous with occasion, a soul falling and soaring, now subject to ecstasies and now to remorse..." To the contrary, he was distinguished by perpetual seriousness, even in his youth," by a solemn and even austere demeanour of mind" which can be traced in all his works. Coupled with his gravity was a lofty egotism which asserted his justifiable self-esteem of his own powers. The egotism

was an essential part of his moral austerity; both motivated his actions and influenced his poetry. Milton had little or no sense of humor and was unable to look at men from different points of view:

His laughter is the laughter of scorn. With one unvarying judicial look, he confronted the actions of men, and, if ever his tone altered as he uttered his judgments, it was only because something roused him to a higher pitch of passion.¹⁰⁷

In a comparison with Dante, Masson concludes that Milton's poems are less subjective than the Divina Commedia; Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained reveal "the habit of the objective artist."¹⁰⁸ He does assert that the poet's personality was as subjective as Dante's in the sense of his being intensely involved in the controversies of his time and holding strong personal views in politics, ethics, and religion. But in Milton's case there was less direct carry-over of the man into the poetry; the Puritan poet took a theme or incident on its own account and treated it artistically in a more objective manner than Dante's extremely subjective genius allowed him to do. This is qualified when he adds that it was inevitable that the poems were infused with "Miltonism" — i.e., that they should be full of his "own peculiar character and no other." Throughout Paradise Lost and giving it a "sense of difference" from any other thing in human experience, Masson is aware of a "certain personal something," a unique and undeniable "boom of self-conscious magnanimity" for which there is

no other name but "Miltonic."¹⁰⁹ This ever-present quality in Milton's poetry derives directly from his great egotism, the forceful strength of his personality and his own awareness of it. The "Miltonic" element pervades Paradise Regained as well, though he states that it too is a work of the "objective order."¹¹⁰ In the dialogues between Christ and Satan, and especially in the words of Christ since his sentiments are naturally the best, Masson recognizes the voice of Milton himself "speaking and moralizing." The critic does not push this idea as far as he might, but it could easily be extended to mean that Milton used his two characters in Paradise Regained as mere mouthpieces. It is obvious that Masson wants to avoid such a conclusion, however, in his continued insistence that the epics are "objective." Taking into account then the omnipresence of the Miltonic element, it appears that the chief difference between Milton and Dante on the point of the subjective in their poetry lies less in the result of their creative efforts than in their initial approach. The Divina Commedia served as a vehicle to express the personal philosophy of a "great and much exercised man." Dante definitely resolved before writing the poem to give "all that was in his mind" concerning all of his experience. Milton initially approached the subject of his epics more impersonally as the "record of the beginnings of human history," but the personality inevitably asserted itself, even in the choice of the final subject

for his great epic. This subject, dealing with the "entire created universe" was Miltonic enough even for Milton whose genius demanded the greatest possible challenge.

Masson stresses Milton's great respect for intellectual capacity and especially mental greatness "of his own stamp or marked by any of his own features." He believes that this explains the poet's sympathetic treatment of Satan and the tone of "almost pitying admiration" for the ruined angel which marks the first two books of Paradise Lost. This great respect for creative intellect also explains his treatment of Pagan subjects; Milton's own mind, though naturally austere, remained free of sectarian prejudices which were current in his age. He loved beauty and pursued it in all its forms; this tempered the severity and restraint of his disposition. The earlier poems, Lycidas and Comus in particular, show his early delight in natural beauty and his ardent wish to serve "only the good and the honourable." The writer adds, however, that occasionally "the sterner Miltonic spirit" flashes out, as in the hireling shepherd passage in Lycidas and the firm speeches of the Lady in Comus. Underneath the flowers and the beauty of the early poems "ever lay in Milton all manly strength."¹¹¹

Masson says that Milton's matured mind reveals itself also in his later poetic style. In the epics and the drama Milton did not concern himself so much with the sensuous imagery and the musical effects which mark his early genius. For the most part, the style is direct and obvious, "each

sentence marching on with a steady progressive motion towards the complete evolution of what is necessary in meaning, and nothing more." Especially in Samson and Paradise Regained the terse simplicity reveals the grand austerity of the Puritan's old age.

The differences between the early and later poetry must be explained by all that happened to Milton in his twenty years as a politician, theologian, and controversial prose writer. Masson believes the choice of subjects significant in the light of the biography. Samson Agonistes was the direct "inspiration of his blindness, aided and confirmed by his fondness for Scriptures in general, and his bitter relish for the opportunity of handling such a secondary character as Dalilah." He notes that Milton's unhappy marriage to Mary Powell necessarily influenced his later poetry. Paradise Regained was a natural sequel to Paradise Lost, and the latter was the only subject which satisfied Milton's desire to leave to the English people an immortal work. "As the capabilities of this subject flashed upon his view, his soul, we will suppose, exulted, and there was no need for farther search."¹¹² As early as 1845 Masson had set forth his view that Milton's blindness was a definite qualification for writing Paradise Lost. In an article in Chamber's Journal he had noted the visual imagery of the poem with its great use of the effects of light and darkness in all forms and concluded that such results could best be attained by a blind person.¹¹³

Masson's treatment of Samson Agonistes is based almost entirely on the biography. In 1641, he says, Milton jotted down a list of possible subjects for future dramas, among which was the story of Samson, but he little realized "how much of his own particular life was to correspond with the fate of that particular hero of the Hebrews."¹¹⁴ In Masson's view, Milton became increasingly aware of this similarity as "coincidence after coincidence, shock after shock," brought the figure of Samson constantly before his imagination. Thus in choosing his dramatic subject Milton was guided by "destiny as much as by choice," and the result was a "metaphor of the tragedy of his own life."

In spite of this biographical approach, he asserts that Milton offered it to the public "simply as a specimen of pure and careful dramatic production after the Greek model." He then insists on the "profoundly and intensely subjective" nature of the drama. Thus Samson may be viewed as a classical drama based on a Hebrew legend or as a personal allegory representing the poet in the Restoration period. Indeed, to grasp the full meaning and significance, the reader must be aware of both aspects. In spite of its classical model, none of Milton's poetry gives such a true exhibition of his personality, "such a proclamation of his own thoughts about himself and about the world about him as his Samson Agonistes." By choosing this subject he assured himself that he would once more address his countrymen

as himself, as he had done in the prose works, without fear of censorship or political reprisal. To Masson, Samson is a last defiant outburst, a final tremendous effort of the old Puritan republican to make a bold stand against his enemies.

Specific passages from Samson receive biographical interpretation to support this theory. The soliloquy on blindness gives Milton's own complaint upon his loss of sight and the extreme dejection which must have frequently "recurred to him overpoweringly..." The most depressing and pathetic passages which bring out Samson's position among his enemies represent the poet's personal statement of his corresponding position. When the chorus speaks of the "punishment of dissolute days," he refers directly to the Restoration with "all its circumstances of reaction and of revenge on the regicides, and its effects on Milton's fortunes in particular."¹¹⁵ Masson avoids an overt biographical interpretation of the Dalila episode, merely stating that on this point "there has been sufficient remark," but he does add that the remarks of the chorus on her departure is an "almost literal excerpt" from the divorce tracts which sums up Milton's "incurably perverted opinion of women." In Samson's challenge to Harapha, he sees the Puritan's persistent pugnacity, "his longing for another Salmasius to grapple with, his chafing under the public silence to which he is enforced in the midst of repeated attacks and insults..."¹¹⁶

The writer says that such interpretations are necessary in order to understand the poet's subtle purpose of "extraordinary self-transmutation before the astonished Restoration world..." Milton wished to show his enemies the immediate transformation of the prose controversialist into the supreme poet. As a whole then the drama is a masterful depiction of the Puritan republican opposed to the Restoration in all its "swinish" decadence. The Restoration courtiers from King Charles II down were in Milton's eyes all Philistines. Through the drama into which he poured all his bitter condemnation, he emerged glorious and triumphant. So much for the man in the drama. A greater tribute to Milton's artistry is Masson's statement that nothing in the poem is forced or inserted that is not in keeping with the original Hebrew legend. No part of the plot, language, or characterization is distorted or overstrained by the strong biographical element. In no way did his personal purpose obtrude upon his supreme artistic achievement.¹¹⁷

In his review of Masson's Life of Milton (1859), Walter Bagehot used that biographer's conception of Milton as an austere Puritan as a framework in which to develop his own ideas of Milton as a man and the relation of the character to the poetry.¹¹⁸ Like Masson, he stresses Milton's Puritanism and outlines at some length the ascetic characteristics which set the poet apart from all other writers. He says that the general traits of the ascetic

personality are a seclusion from the world in a sort of moral solitude, an extremely rigid morality, a meditative type of religion, excessive pride and ignorance of others coupled with a definite lack of sympathy with other people. These characteristics collectively define Milton's austere character. Bagehot says that the poet's whole being can be summed up in the great commandment, "Reverence thyself." He carefully notes, however, that this temperament does not exclude goodness, while remarking that Milton's aloof gravity and severity could show no patience with "what is low." In his private life the poet was a "harsh and choleric man."

Bagehot states that Milton's extreme austerity is the first thing that strikes a reader of his poetry: "There is a solemn and firm music in the lines; a brooding sublimity that haunts them; the spirit of the great writer moves over the face of the page..."¹¹⁹ The poet's harsh severity was increased by his constant study, his lack of humor, and his ignorance of human nature. These defects prevented his ever knowing the ordinary world of "cakes and ale"; people never talk and come to life in his works as they do in Shakespeare's. His poems are removed and elevated from life since "Milton's eye had never rested with easy pleasure on the easy, ordinary, shopkeeping world." In his drama Milton's deficiencies are most apparent. According to Bagehot, a tragedy such as Samson Agonistes absolutely required the comic element for artistic contrast. Unrelieved seriousness in an artist can never,

he says, truthfully represent a great catastrophe:

"We realize most perfectly and easily the great idea, the tragic conception, when we are familiarized with its effects on the minds of little people, with the petty consequences which it causes as well as with the enormous forces from which it comes."¹²⁰ He states that Milton was under the "greatest obligation" to use comic relief in Samson since he had used every means to heighten the strictly tragic element which requires that relief. But his poetry, always serious, is never more serious than in Samson.

His Samson is not the incarnation of physical strength which the popular fancy embodies in the character; nor is it the simple and romantic character of the Old Testament. On the contrary, Samson has become a Puritan: the observations he makes would have done much credit to a religious pikeman in Cromwell's army. In consequence, his death requires some lightening touches to make it a properly artistic event. The pomp of seriousness becomes too oppressive.¹²¹

The highest praise that Bagehot can give to Milton's drama is that it is "fine and grave," but "Shakespeare would have done it better."

Although he finds the key to Milton's character in his austerity and examines that "peculiar character" in Milton's relations with Mary Powell as well as his political activities, Bagehot gives the poet one relieving element — an extreme sensitiveness to the "world of eye and ear." The poet could respond immediately to the beauty of sight and sound; his austerity was not caused by obtuse senses but by an excess

of "the warning instinct." But even amid the most beautiful natural scenes he could never lose his aloof severity; in the "sensuous delight" of L'Allegro solitariness (not melancholy as Johnson said) is everywhere discernible. The very words he chose and his manner of using them reflect the man's character: "...there is the same austerity in the real essence, the same exquisiteness of sense, the same delicacy of form which we know that he had, the same music which we imagine there was in his voice."¹²²

Comus reveals both Milton's austerity and his fine sense of natural beauty. Bagehot bluntly condemns the characters, ideas, and story as dull and uninteresting, but this, he says, must be done in order to realize its true greatness. The power of the masque lies in its style: A "firm and grave music" pervades it from beginning to end; it is fragile without one trace of weakness, harmonious yet strong, impressive yet beautiful. Bagehot admits that there is light literature better than Comus, which can be read more easily and remembered longer, but none gives so true an insight into "the capacity and dignity" of the man behind the poetry. The "breath of solemnity" which distinguished the man moves through Comus and Paradise Lost and unflinchingly arouses the reader with an idea of "indefinite power." In both Milton's character and his poetry there was an "ascetic nature in a sheath of beauty."

SUMMARY

We have seen that Milton occupied a place in nineteenth century New England life and thought comparable on all points to his position in England fifty years earlier. Writers for the North American Review and other periodicals unreservedly venerated every aspect of his life and character. Frequent references to Milton's Puritan piety and the religious nature of his poetry point up the fact that New Englanders based their approach to the man and his works largely on the now familiar concept of the Sacred Bard. But natural political sympathies with the poet's republicanism forged an additional bond which further strengthened Milton's place as the dual symbol of religious piety and political liberty. Milton's personal character figured more importantly to New England writers than the poetry itself. For this reason his poems were often searched for biographical allusions which might be used as direct evidence of his great character. However, the biographical method proper was used by Emerson and other writers to interpret or to give added significance to the poetry. New England writers show the increasing interest of this period in the influence of Milton's age upon his works.

Directly opposed to the New England attitude, De Bow's Review attempted to destroy the Puritan idol by attacking Milton's personal character and his poetry. George Fitzhugh turned the biographical method against the poet in his

politically biased assault. Both the Southern and the New England attitudes clearly show that, almost two centuries after his death, Milton's character and career were still capable of arousing the highest respect or the most bitter condemnation. The relation of the biography to the literary criticism is in both cases almost inseparable.

British periodicals also attest to the growing use of biographical material in the interpretation of Milton's poetry. In fact, there is little unity in the popular criticism of the period other than the increasing alliance of the biography and the literary criticism. We have seen that the Whig and Tory approaches to Milton were still distinct. As in the preceding period, liberal writers stressed the importance of the controversial years to the poet's development. Some critics used Milton's political life as a means of explaining passages in the poetry. Tributes to Milton's patriotism, however, were less frequent, though Macaulay's influence is certainly discernible in some cases. Conservative writers continued to play down the importance of the middle years to Milton's life; they refused to consider the Great Rebellion and Commonwealth periods as exerting any influence on the poetry. This attitude, of course, appeared in the eighteenth century. The number of notices, however, indicates that Milton's politics disturbed Tory critics much less as the Victorian period moved forward.

An obvious difference between New England and British

periodical criticism is the decreasing interest shown by British writers towards Milton's theology and the religious aspects of his poetry. Only a few writers retained the concept of Milton as the Sacred Bard.

The critics who preceded Masson in this period approached Milton in various ways. Carlyle differed from Emerson in noting the limitations of Milton's poetry, a charge attributed to the poet's sectarianism and his extremely subjective personality. De Quincey's criticism rested on a psychological approach which attempted to explain the characteristics of Paradise Lost by relating the poem to Milton's mind and character. Milton's "religious solemnity" formed the basis of Hallam's criticism. Hallam and Stebbing used biographical material in tracing the differences between the early and later poems. Stebbing considered Paradise Lost as the final expression of Milton's entire life.

Gilfillan and St. John panegyricized Milton from different viewpoints. St. John's interpretation of the poet as a Utilitarian followed Macaulay's emphasis on Milton as a great patriot. Gilfillan stressed Milton's personal character and his private virtues. Both critics praised the man and his works in almost identical terms.

Although Landor disliked some of Milton's personal traits, he exalted his great character and poetic genius. Like De Quincey, he rarely used overt biographical material to interpret the poetry. Landor's great dislike of Milton's theology led him to separate the subject matter from the manner of expression.

Masson's portrayal of Milton as a great Puritan marks a turning point in nineteenth century criticism. Bagehot and other critics who followed Masson used the Puritanism as their basic approach to the poet. The personal traits of austerity, egotism, self-consciousness, and lack of humor formed an integral part of the literary criticism. Although Masson asserted that Milton treated his poetic subjects objectively, he used the biographical approach to a great extent, especially in his criticism of Samson Agonistes. His interpretation of the drama had been anticipated by Gilfillan and others, of course, but his discovery of personal and political allusions exceeded those of his predecessors. Masson believed the biographical element in Samson in no way detrimental to the artistic merit. Bagehot, on the other hand, asserted that Milton's extreme austerity and his lack of humor were harmful to his art.

As a whole, the criticism of this period shows that interest declined in Milton as a great patriot and a controversialist writer, as critics began to stress his personal character as a man and his abilities as an artist. At the same time they increasingly sought to relate the poetry to the man by viewing one in the light of the other.

CHAPTER IV

MILTON CRITICISM: 1860-1909

But his doom
Reserved him to more wrath . . .

Four years after the appearance of Masson's first volume, H. Taine published his Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise (1863), which contained a unique and important study of Milton.¹ Taine's work is especially important, for he used biographical material almost entirely in his critical interpretation of Paradise Lost, perhaps to a greater extent than any other critic. Taine's critical method aimed at a completely objective approach to the poet through a study of heredity, character, and environment. His procedure was to ask certain questions, answer them as accurately as possible, and base his criticism on the result. First, he would inquire into heredity by determining the subject's birthplace, ancestry, and the "root ideas" of his race. Next, he would consider the writer's education, position in society, and the effects of his age -- "the spirit of the times" -- upon him. Finally, he would determine the basic peculiarities of his time and decide how they were manifested. Having answered with certainty these questions, Taine would formulate the faculté maîtresse of the author's intellect, the basic quality which underlies and determines his talents and gives the critical key to his merits as a literary artist. In other words, Taine would carry David Masson's biographical method one step further in making the biographical and historical facts the fundamental basis of the criticism.

In his criticism of Milton's poetry, Taine examines the poet's biography and concludes that his faculté maîtresse was sublimity. Contrasting Milton with Shakespeare, he asserts that the Puritan did not feel life as directly as the Elizabethan poets did, but was moved by an innate sense of grandeur

like Aeschylus and the Hebrew prophets.² Milton never wrote from immediate impulse but with the reserve of a man of letters and a philosopher; the influence of his learning, his knowledge of books, appears in all his writings. His great spirit, wise, serious, religious, moves unmistakably through his prose and poetry alike. Taine describes Milton's genius as completely subjective. All of the characters in his poems reflect the Puritan moralist; he was unable to conceive and execute dramatic characters; he could not depict minds other than his own.

From the historical standpoint, Taine approaches Milton as uniting definite characteristics of the Renaissance and the Reformation. He traces the Renaissance elements in the early poems, what he calls the profane works, which were produced before the Reformation elements came to dominate his thought. The early poems ending with Comus show Spenser's influence in the rich, sensuous imagery, dream-like atmosphere, splendour of detail, magnificent depiction of form and color. Unlike his predecessors - Spenser, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakespeare, Drummond, and Ben Jonson - Milton's inspiration came from his reading, not from direct contact with nature. He possessed

...toute la splendide Renaissance anglaise, et, par derriere elle, la poesie italienne, l'antiquite latine, la belle litterature grecque, et toutes les sources d'ou la Renaissance anglaise avait jailli.³

His style, less natural than the Elizabethan manner, was more regular and more suitable for concentration of effect. To the Renaissance elements of splendour, color, richness, and

beauty the faculté maîtresse added nobility, elevation, and purity to the poetry. Taine names Comus as the chef-d'oeuvre of the profane poems since it shows all the Renaissance elements as well as the unique additions of the poet's personality. Lycidas he regards as a transitional poem since it reveals Milton's interest in theological disputes -- les préoccupations puritaines -- a characteristic of his later Reformation side.

Taine believes that as Milton grew older and passed through the political and theological controversies of the Rebellion and Commonwealth periods, the Reformation elements increasingly dominated his mind. His natural austerity, severity, and aloof dignity became more pronounced both in his life and his poetry. The taste for rich, natural beauty, the contribution of the Renaissance to the early poems, was gradually replaced by the cold, exacting strength of the ascetic Puritan. Mythology gave way to theology, lyricism yielded to philosophical dissertation, as seventeen years of political activity surcharged with religious disputation infused his mind with Puritan doctrine.

Le poète ne chante plus en vers sublimes, il raconte ou harangue en vers graves. Il n'invente plus un genre personnel, il imite la tragédie ou l'épopée antique. Il rencontre dans Samson une tragédie froide et haute, dans le Paradis Regagné une épopée froide et noble, et compose un poème imparfait et sublime, le Paradis Perdu.⁴

Taine regards Paradise Lost as an "imperfect but sublime" poem, Milton as a controversial Puritan theologian, and proceeds to study the epic on these assumptions. The entire poem is explained by biographical and closely related historical

material with great emphasis on the dominance of theology in Milton's mind.

To Taine, the characters in Paradise Lost represent actual contemporaries or definite types of people of Milton's time; in no case does the poet succeed in rendering a character or dialogue which does not smack deeply of the Puritan or show the author's propensity for theological discussion. Of Adam and Eve, he states that the "first couple" bear no resemblance to the Biblical or the Renaissance version of the superbes enfants, vigoureux et voluptueux. Instead, Taine finds a typical English ménage, perhaps the home of Colonel Hutchinson and his wife, actively engaged in considering current events in dialogues that sound like sermons, eagerly disputing fine points of theology with philosophical skill. Adam must have passed through England on his way to Paradise and picked up "respectability," English morality, and perhaps a Bachelor of Arts degree from Oxford. Taine says that undoubtedly Adam was the head of the family, perhaps a Member of the House of Commons, who could speak prudently to his wife on the cause of bad dreams. Taine adds that it was enough to send poor Eve to sleep again. Eve herself represents Milton's idea of the typical English housewife, preparing the meals efficiently and discreetly retiring after dinner, so that Adam and Raphael can talk politics. She is a happy choice for a country squire's wife, a valuable addition to his political ambitions as an active member of the opposition, a typical Whig Puritan. Eve herself, as seen in her dialogue with Satan, obviously spent

some time at Oxford and learned the art of skillful disputation.

Taine interprets Milton's God as a grave, sedate king, blending characteristics of King James I and his unfortunate son, Charles. He is much addicted to the finer points of theology and never wearies of holding forth to listeners who should be well-paid for listening. Like "the wisest fool in Christendom" he is incomparably boring as he harangues on the Arminian controversy in Book III. Like Charles, he is an arbitrary monarch, whom the reader can visualize with his furred robe, Van Dyck beard, and elevated throne. He is much concerned, like his seventeenth century prototype, to justify his methods of government. Further, Heaven has become Milton's celestial version of Whitehall replete with embroidered valets and royal musicians. Activities in the heavenly spheres suggest contemporary London scenes with the popular street fêtes and the sounding chimes of church bells.

With inexorable consistency Satan leads the Parliamentary Army like Oliver Cromwell (or perhaps like Lambert or Monk) to quarters in the North. Abdiel, a good Royalist, refutes the blasphemous arguments of the rebels, and rejoins his Prince at Oxford. The battle in heaven furnishes Taine with a wealth of material for his interpretation:

On y trouve des ordres du jour, une hiérarchie, une soumission exacte, des corvées, des disputes, des cérémonies réglées, des prosternements, une étiquette, des armes fourbies, des arsenaux, des dépôts de chariots et de munitions. Était-ce la peine de quitter la terre pour retrouver là-haut la charronnerie, la maçonnerie, l'artillerie, le manuel administratif, l'art de saluer et l'almanach royal?⁵

As Cromwell, Satan is a heroic figure uniting all the fierce and sombre political and religious passions of the English Puritans. And though the fallen angel, unlike his prototype, is defeated in battle, Taine asserts that Milton meant to depict, through the lost cause and the banishment to Hell, the hardships of the Puritan refugees in America among "the panthers and the savages." Taine sees in the great and courageous figure of Satan the true characteristics of the English people and their literature.

Taine gives his greatest praise to Milton's imagery in the descriptions of Hell and Paradise. It is only here, he states, when Milton speaks as a stern republican through Satan, that the poet's genius overcame the heavy burden of theology and responded to the faculté maîtresse of sublimity to produce unequalled poetic passages. Thus the imperfect nature of Paradise Lost, to Taine, resulted not from lack of genius, but from the unalterable events of his life which placed Milton in the midst of political and religious controversies and "enchained" him in a strict theological doctrine. The poetic freedom of the youthful author of Comus was crushed out in the mature poet of Paradise Lost. Milton could only ask for other men that liberty which his own spirit had lost.

Taine's criticism of Paradise Lost was treated unfavorably by English reviewers, while recent Milton scholars have described his allegorical interpretation as being pushed so far as to be ridiculous.⁶ His British contemporaries found the French critic's obviously flippant, at times almost sarcastic

tone, especially irritating; and it must be admitted that the charge is justified. However, Taine's method did much to eliminate personal bias and animosity from literary criticism, and this fact more than compensates for some of his exaggerated conclusions. The flippant attitude naturally clashed with the slowly waning reverence given to Milton as a sacred poet in England, but it has been shown that this vestigial attitude of the eighteenth century actually obstructed a free, truly critical approach to the poetry.

After Taine's criticism of Paradise Lost provoked sharp replies from some British periodicals, Edmond Scherer followed in 1868 with an interpretation of Milton's epic based on an approach somewhat like Taine's but with more attention placed on the theology and less emphasis given to allegorical interpretation.⁷ Scherer asserted that a careful examination of an author's biography and a close study of his historical period would "spontaneously" give the essential character of his works, and, at the same time, would eliminate all personal and arbitrary judgments of the critic.

As Taine had done, Scherer considered Milton as uniting the rather sharply opposed elements of the Renaissance and Puritanism. He states that all of the characteristics of Milton's genius and works can be explained by this double affiliation of two great periods in English history. In the young poet of the companion poems and Comus, Scherer notices the refinements of artistic taste, interest in classical mythology, and the enthusiastic appreciation of poetry without regard to di-

dactic purpose which marked the Elizabethan age. Milton's love of Shakespeare and Spenser, clearly evident in the style and subjects of his earlier poems, shows that the Renaissance influence dominated his mind before he assumed his role as a controversialist during the Great Rebellion. Scherer's only interest in Milton's minor poems is to use them as an illustration of his youthful temperament, though he adds that L'Allegro and Il Penseroso would easily have immortalized Milton if he had written nothing else.

Scherer's great interest lies in Milton's later life and the production of Paradise Lost as he stresses the changes brought about in Milton's character by the tragic circumstances of his lost cause. He portrays Milton as growing more and more sombre during the Commonwealth Period, and especially after the Restoration, when he was isolated by his blindness, his lack of friends, and the very strength of his own genius. In his old age Milton turned his thoughts almost wholly to religious subjects and began to dictate his Puritan epic; Scherer is consistent in pointing out both Puritan and Renaissance elements in Paradise Lost; he insists that the poem only reflects the dual nature of the poet's personality, with the difference that in the poem the opposed aspects of the Renaissance artist and the Puritan theologian are even more incompatible than they were in Milton's mind. Scherer's conception of the Puritan character unites the derogatory stereotype with a frank admiration for individual accomplishments:

Comme tout homme esclave d'une seule idée, il sera
à la fois ridicule et héroïque. Voyez ces vêtements

tristes, ces têtes rasées, ces mines longues; écoutez ce patois biblique, ces chants nasillards, ces prières sans fin, ces discussions subtiles, ces malédictions sur le monde et ses amusements: vous vous détournez avec un sourire de pitié ou de dégoût. A la bonne heure! mais ces mêmes hommes sont de braves soldats et de zélés citoyens...⁸

Undoubtedly Scherer's opinion of the Puritans influenced his condemnation of the theological discussions in Paradise Lost.

Only the form of Paradise Lost was furnished by the Renaissance: modeled on the ancient epic with invocation, action beginning in medias res, and the epic scale of action which is regular and classical. But le fond of the poem is furnished by Puritanism; it is essentially a theological epic composed of the favorite dogmas of the Puritans: the fall, justification, sovereign laws of God. Milton does not conceal his thesis, but as a typical Puritan states his didactic purpose "to justify the ways of God to man." Scherer's chief stricture rests on his charge that the theological doctrine is incompatible with the classical poetic form and epic technique.⁹ He maintains that form and content contradict each other since the very nature of the Christian religion -- serious, dogmatic, and, most important, still living -- cannot be treated in the same way as pagan subjects. Nor can Christian subject matter be decorated with the ornaments of mythology; its essence is redemption, mortification, and good works, matters scarcely suitable to capricious myths or even to poetic treatment of any kind. The very reason that Christianity was still vital to millions of people represented to Scherer sufficient reason for condemning as profane any poet who would treat it in poetry.

But Milton must be exonerated from the charge of profanation, since, according to Scherer, he had little choice in selecting his epic subject. The sublime poet became a Puritan theologian and was thus literally forced to choose a religious theme. The result was Paradise Lost, composed of two elements, gold and clay, sublimity and scholasticism, the most extraordinary and at the same time the most unbearable poem ever written. Scherer maintains that Milton actually fought against the conditions imposed by his rigidly bound subject, but he only made the faults more obvious. He summarizes:

...le Paradis perdu est un poème faux, un poème grotesque, un poème ennuyeux; il n'est pas un lecteur sur cent qui puisse lire, sans sourire, les livres neuvième et dixième, ou lire, sans bailler, les livres onzième et douzième.¹⁰

Paradise Lost is a pyramid standing on its apex, and it is the fault of Milton's Puritanism. As Taine claimed, Milton was enchained by his theology which blanketed his natural genius under the dogmatic dissertations esteemed by his narrow religious sect. Another factor which contributed to the failure of the epic was "the heavy weight of hours" which was his life during the Restoration Period. His severe and sombre temper in old age sharply contrasted with the youthful enthusiasm of the early poems. Much of the Renaissance inheritance once held so strongly by Milton was lost, though not all of it. Scherer does find magnificent fragments, isolated passages of description which render the poem immortal by the elevated style and beautiful imagery. Inherent in the style of these passages is unequalled serenity and indomitable power of expression. But in spite of this Scherer finds Milton's philosophy

so repellent that he can only call the poem as a whole a magnificent failure.

F. W. Farrar panegyrized Milton's character and poetry in the Gentleman's Magazine (1868), comparing Shakespeare's "oceanic, myriad-minded genius" to Milton's "rarer and lordlier soul."¹¹ He states that it may show the Puritan's literary deficiency, but it certainly points up his "moral strength," that he could not conceive such characters as Falstaff or Sir Toby Belch. He names Paradise Lost the "imperishable monument of a most lofty soul." He portrays Milton as a grand, austere Puritan who took his inspiration not from "the heat of youth and the vapours of wine," but by devout prayer to the Eternal Spirit.

...my language is too imperfect to convey my own conception of this lofty, and vestal, and stately soul. He was, to my mind, one of the very purest, one of the very sublimest, of mortal men; from eighteen Christian centuries the noblest impersonation of Christian manhood -- patriot and sage and saint.¹²

The literary criticism which follows this tribute follows the same pattern. Farrar attaches the familiar panegyric tags to the poems: "The rich and dignified" passages of Comus, the "wailing strains" of Lycidas, the "soul animating strains" of the sonnets, the "majestic, unequalled music" of Paradise Lost. Farrar blends Masson's portrait of the austere Puritan with Macaulay's idealized concept of Milton, quoting frequently from both critics.

In a review of Masson's Life (1872), a Quarterly Reviewer exclaimed, "We shall be glad when the strictly controversial years in Milton's life are concluded!"¹³ It appears that the

old bugbear of Milton's politics still nettled the Tory critics almost two centuries after the poet's death and continued to influence their approach to the poetry. Their methods have changed to some extent, as seen in their readiness to blame Johnson for allowing his political prejudices to distort his poetical insight. But one is tempted to add, "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones," for three anonymous writers for the Quarterly in this period obviously shaped their interpretation of Milton to conform to their own views. This reviewer emphasizes Milton's Puritan austerity, and, surprisingly enough, links the poet's name with the cause of freedom. Admitting that politics color much of the poetry, he maintains that political and theological issues were always subordinate in the poet's mind to the "poetical impulse." The controversial years did help to form the poet, and this is a notable concession for a Tory writer to make, but he must add that only the "noble expression" of that influence as seen in the later poems can be of any interest. Thus the emphasis remains on Milton as a lofty poet, although the earlier practice of illustrating Milton's character from the early poems has been replaced by a more liberal approach which admits at least the existence of the Commonwealth Period. The writer interprets Samson as Milton's personal statement of his dilemma "when every hope of the cause which he fondly identified with all that was good in life had vanished...." Noting that Milton's rebellious nature prevented his being an "obedient mouth piece" to anyone (Cromwell is implied), he agrees with Masson and Bagehot that "a vein of austerity and self-assertion" in

the poet's nature led him into a certain harshness both in his personal life and his poetry. This trait he possessed in addition to his "indubitable tenderness of heart and beauty of disposition...." The writer is obviously somewhat confused as he sometimes follows the standard Tory line and sometimes agrees with Masson. It should be noted, however, that he does not mention the noble qualities of Puritanism, while he does stress the idealism. "Milton as statesman and as theologian is always working under poetic impulse...."¹⁴

Four years later, a writer for the Quarterly Review brought up Macaulay's essay which he described as "the most gorgeous and highflown panegyric to be found anywhere in print."¹⁵ This writer strongly objects to Macaulay's description of Milton as the "martyr of English liberty," and makes a half-hearted attempt to defend King Charles I. Sarcastically he turns to Milton's "Arianism and his views on polygamy" while pointing out Macaulay's gross misinterpretation of De Doctrina Christiana. Milton, he asserts, actually rejected the authority of Scripture and the best traditions of Christian and European civilization, seeking to inculcate "Asiatic sensuality and corruption." He adds that "this is one of the cases in which the debasement of the opinion largely detracts from the elevation of the man." While reluctantly giving Milton the "highest genius," the praise is greatly mitigated when he attaches "fierceness of opinion, violence of prejudice, and senility" to the poet's character. In a last condemnation of Macaulay and Whig panegyric, he warns: "If ever there was an instance in which close and cautious discrimination is demanded from a

critic, it is the case of Milton."

A less violent but still obviously Tory approach to Milton occurred in 1882, when the familiar "solitariness and sublimity" were given to Milton by an anonymous writer for the Quarterly Review.¹⁶ The writer follows Matthew Arnold's definition of the grand style as he emphasizes the "elevated tone" of Paradise Lost and the concomitant qualities of the poet's character: solemnity, gravity, majesty, nobility, loftiness. Carefully noting that these elements of the poetry are not communicated through "dogma or deliverance" (he would not attribute them to Milton's Puritanism), he states, "we catch the poet's mental attitude." Explaining the early poems by the "Elizabethan gaiety...without licentiousness," he points out that the Commonwealth period deepened Milton's mind by "stern experience" and gave to his later sonnets a "majestic severity." Of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, he says that the "dialogues between the Father and the Son, and his whole celestial atmosphere, are even at the best, frigid." The defect sprang from Milton's "proud and isolated nature." Solitariness coupled with a lack of sympathy threw him back upon himself and his books; consequently, his later poetry shows both the strong egotism of the poet and his multifarious reading. The writer adds that Samson, "blind and in chains, was doubtless a picture of himself in his old age."

In contrast to the Quarterly Review, more liberal periodicals received Masson's volumes with much more obvious pleasure in that biographer's stress on Puritanism and the "grand old cause." The British Quarterly Review (1874) exalted

Hampden, Pym, Cromwell, and Milton as "an illustrious galaxy almost unparalleled for intellect and integrity..."¹⁷ Milton himself is named "the greatest religious poet of the world" with the "sublimest in human nature attaching to his character." Noting that the poet was "cast into the seething sea of politics," he describes the "grandeur of repose" and the "lofty ideality" which lifted him above his contemporaries in the Restoration and enabled him to produce his last great poems. Four years later, another writer for the same periodical speculated that even those who disagreed with Milton's political ideas had no choice but to give the poet credit for his "unswerving adherence" to the cause he believed right.¹⁸ In soaring panegyric he builds Milton up as the great liberal hero:

...there are few nobler figures in our history than that of Milton, few men who have rendered such great and illustrious, yet ungrudging, services to the people...Sublime in mind, Milton appears equally sublime in his integrity and virtue.¹⁹

From such articles as these it clearly appears that the spirit of Macaulay was not dead in the late nineteenth century, in spite of the attacks of the intrepid Tory reviewers. To some at least, the man still united the roles of the champion of freedom and the immortal epic poet.

In 1873, ten years after Taine's completely biographical interpretation of Paradise Lost, a writer for Temple Bar, a periodical with conservative political views and an anti-Milton bias, analysed Milton's epic with results somewhat similar to the French critic's.²⁰ He attempts to account for the "progress" of English literature on the basis of a movement

away from nature, spontaneity, freshness, and apparently the true spirit of poetry. The writer conveniently uses Milton's great love of books as the starting point in deriding his poetry. He attempts to make his approach historical with occasional references to the "spirit of the age," but the over-all effect is to decide that Milton was a thorough-going bookworm "to the tips of his fingers" and that his poetry consequently lacks the qualities so valued in Shakespeare: intimate contact with life and nature, complete freedom of expression. To some extent, he says, "the narrowness, asceticism, and gloom" of the Reformation affected Milton's character and his poetry, but this was augmented by his intolerant egotism which made his narrow sympathies with men even more limited. There is a strong anti-Puritan tone which naturally carries over to the poet. Those qualities satirized by the Restoration writers are held up as the dominant traits not only of the Puritan sect, but of Milton himself. The old stereotype of men with short hair, praying through their noses with religious fanaticism, intolerant of all opinions but their own, narrowly dogmatic and ignorant of everything except theological doctrine represents the Puritan to this writer. The writer states that only Milton's great learning saved his poetry from the devastating effects of Puritanism. If Milton had not brought classical mythology into his works, he would have been unbearable with his Puritan dogma. The critic continues by attributing Milton's poetic style to the effects of the Reformation. The spontaneity, the "savagery" of the Elizabethan poets has become in Milton a well-ordered stateliness, a measured calmness,

with every word in its proper place, which shows that his observations of the world came through books and not through direct experience.

(In Milton's poetry) we bid farewell forever to extravagance, to riotous imagery, to redundant metaphors, to gorgeous pleonasm, to mob-like similes... The reign of excess is over, as is that of toleration, and instead of the 'sweet south' stealing and giving odours, we shall have the smell of the midnight lamp.²¹

The writer skillfully interweaves his political opinions with his literary criticism. He does admit that the earlier poems give evidence that Milton had direct contact with nature, but Paradise Lost lacks "the sense of reality in the majority of the natural descriptions." He considers this a definite fault; the descriptions of Paradise lack the "indefinable charm which lurks in the best poetry...." His heaviest condemnation is his charge that much of Milton's poetry "smells of the library." The paradox in this criticism is that Milton is condemned for being a "glorious book-worm," yet his learning is that quality which makes his poetry readable at all.

In his criticism of Paradise Lost, the critic carries on with his thesis that Milton's poetry lacks "the freshness and crispness of earlier days." His interpretation of the epic emphasizes biographical material in a manner much similar to Taine's method, but his approach is much more biased as he attempts to prove the ill-effects of Milton's religious sect on his poetry. Paradise, he states, has become a trim garden of middle-class Puritans, built on a "largish scale," and when "the owner is past middle-life." Even the introduction of the "Universal Pan" does not convince the reader that Milton

knew natural scenes except from books. The scene in Book V when Eve prepares a feast for Raphael's visit provides an opportunity for satire that is not neglected. Eve, the typical middle-class housewife, is the most "thorough representative of Milton's coreligionists" that the poet could find. He ridicules her selection of fruits and her careful preparations, adding that we "can only wonder Milton forgot the table-cloth." Titania, he adds, would have done it much better, and "Titania is worth a thousand Eves!" He continues his caustic analysis of Raphael's visit, pointing out the "middle-class Puritan" elements: the manners, the speech, the "doubtful politeness," the whole current of ideas are described and derided as thoroughly Puritan.

He states that the parallel could be pursued indefinitely. Milton's age, "the least spiritual" in history, glooms out from Paradise Lost in the narrow dogmatic tone of the entire poem:

Adam dogmatizes; the angels dogmatize; God Almighty himself is made to dogmatize; and we feel ourselves shut up into a narrow world, within which there is very good eating and drinking and a well-arranged garden, and outside of which there is death and damnation.²²

The story of the fall, he states, provides a fine and suggestive subject for an epic poem, but Milton, with his "dreadfully Puritan, middle-class, middle-aged literalness" completely failed to do it justice, in spite of his "magnificent genius and erudition." The weight of this charge rests equally on Milton's character and his religious sect. Apparently, the fact that Milton was a Puritan is intolerable to this writer as he predicts that future readers "will smile" at the poet's

theological ideas and declare his epic "insufferably weighted with extraneous lumber."

Milton's views of women in his private life and in Paradise Lost are examined at length. He declares that the epic would have been an entirely different poem if Milton had not been "narrow, dominating, theological" in his ideas of women. Further, the poet was probably attracted to the biblical story precisely because it gave him opportunity to charge a woman with the sole responsibility for the fall of the human race. He states emphatically that Milton "never loses the opportunity of setting women down and assigning them their proper place." The result is that Eve and Satan are the only two sympathetic characters in the poem. The lines

Not equal, as their sex not equal seemed;
For contemplation he and valour formed,
For softness she and sweet attractive grace;
He for God only, she for God in him.

carry Milton's ideas on the subjugation of women as far as they can go. This statement is not far from Fitzhugh's earlier charge that Milton makes "Mother Eve" no better than a "negro wench."

This article, for all the obvious political animosity to the Puritans and the rather tacked-on attempt to nullify the over-all condemnation by mentioning Milton's "good qualities" -- his "serious, stately, erudite, sublime, and religious" mind -- shows remarkably how far David Masson's interpretation of Milton as the arch-Puritan could be carried by an unsympathetic critic. It may be noted again that Masson's portrayal of Milton as an austere, somewhat haughty egoist did not directly

connect these qualities with Milton's Puritanism; nor did Puritanism carry any disagreeable associations in Masson's view. It remained for later writers in the nineteenth century to rediscover the old Puritan stereotype and finally condemn the poet and Puritanism together. Again it is obvious that derogatory implications against the man were inevitably attached to the poet and his works as well.

In 1869, John Robert Seeley tried to account for the differences in Milton's early and later poetry by a study of the poet's life and times.²³ Like Taine and Scherer, he asserts that Milton united obvious aspects of the English Renaissance and Puritanism in his poetry, but he does not believe that the Puritan influence gradually dominated Milton's thought. Seeley's greatest use of biographical material in interpreting the poetry is his strong emphasis on the Great Rebellion as the turning point in Milton's poetic development. He says that the effect of the "long breathing time" on the poet's genius was to give it greatness -- "daring, condensed force, sublimity" -- a quality not found in the early poems. This, of course, corresponds to Taine's faculté maîtresse, although the French critic did not attribute Milton's greatest poetic quality strictly to the controversial years. Seeley obviously admires Milton's political activities. He states that the early "sweetness and luxury of imagination" which he shared with Spenser give no inkling of the "vigour, the fire, the love of action" innate within Milton. Only the discipline of the "hardy school of controversy and danger" could arouse his greatest capacities as a poet and blend them with his native

imaginative power. Milton stands as the great English ideal poet; like an ancient prophet he assumed a "public function, that of expressing, heightening, and correcting the aspirations of the community." He adds that Milton's own genius and training inclined him to Spenser's manner, but the circumstances of his times made him a prophet, indignantly and intensely concerned in the problems of his countrymen.

In spite of Seeley's almost unqualified admiration for Milton's character and poetic ability (he would place him just below Shakespeare), he is disappointed in Paradise Lost as a true indication of Milton's genius. It is significant that he does not lay the faults of the epic directly on the poet. Instead, he attributes them to historical fact and the biblical subject itself. Thus he asserts that though Milton's grievances with his age led him to write a poem embodying his ideals, the influence of his excessive Renaissance learning threw him back upon antiquity.

...it is characteristic of Milton that he revives Greek and Jewish antiquity together. His genius, his studies, his travels, had made him a Greek, his Puritanism made him at the same time a Jew. In this renaissance there is no taint of paganism. Under the graceful classic forms there lives the sternest sense of duty, the most ardent spirit of sacrifice.²⁴

Despite this commendation, Seeley sees "something unnatural" in Milton's attempt to revive the past. "The attempt to dress Jewish feelings, transplanted to an English heart, in Greek forms has something violent in it." Even Milton's great power could not blend such diverse elements or resolve the conflict between the Renaissance poet and the Puritan theologian. As a Puritan, Milton rebelled against sensuous

worship and dedicated himself to the invisible, spiritual side of religion undegraded by material form. Yet as a poet, and especially one under the influence of the Renaissance with its intense delight in the sensory appeal of visible forms, he could not think, even on religious subjects, without concrete forms. Seeley states, "...with one hand he throws down forms, with the other he raises them up." The critic abhors the "daring materialism" of *Paradise Lost*. Milton's mythology is wholly Greek in conception, not Christian, and shows that the poet felt "no awe" of the spiritual world he was depicting. His angels are not spiritual beings but sedate, serious, and virtuous men whom Adam treats as a subject would a king -- with respect, but with no semblance of astonishment. Milton's imagination, not his morals, was paganized by his contact, through literature, with the spirit of ancient Greece. Much of this charge rests on the critic's view that the Greek mythology is completely irreligious. For a Christian poet, the effect may not be blasphemous, but the "cold touch of the Renaissance" alienates contemporary readers through the loss of the "awe and tenderness which the Christian imagination demands."

These Greek angels, appearing in the costume of Achilles or Aeneas, or declaiming at each other, Aeschines and Demosthenes, on their Pnyx, are not such as either Catholics or Protestants have ever believed in...The poet speaks for himself alone. He does not appear here as the exponent of the popular imagination. He is a brilliant, but often a frigid, and once or twice, I fear, a frivolous mythologer. I confess that I can never read without a shiver that cold blooded myth of the creation of the constellation Libra at the end of the Fourth Book of "*Paradise Lost*."²⁵

Thus the great fault of Paradise Lost is that it is a Renaissance work of art. To Seeley, its outstanding qualities are coldness and artificiality. As a poem, it can excite wonder, but it can never raise sympathy. This stems too from the subject, which does not concern real human beings and prevents Milton from including aspects of his own experience in life. The epic is a mighty "Renaissance temple," unpeopled with real human beings -- hence only an empty building. He remarks that Milton lived in a great age, knew great men, and possessed the most enlightened political views of his time, yet he did not draw directly upon this material for his later poems. The great passion of Milton's life was his intense desire for freedom, and this too finds no poetic expression. To Seeley, this is a matter for genuine regret.

To James Russell Lowell, Milton was the most impressive figure in English literature. In an essay on the poet (1872), Lowell shows his great respect for Milton as a man and something more than a man.²⁶ To him Milton stands as a monument, almost a sacred figure placed in ideal remoteness "from the vulgarities of life." For this reason, he considers Masson's "off-hand, familiar treatment" of the poet as a kind of desecration. He says, "Milton is the last man in the world to be slapped on the back with impunity."²⁷ Yet Lowell's resentment at Masson's familiarity derives also from his conception of the poet as the most egotistical of men. Lowell never ceased to be amazed at the Puritan's self-confident individuality. He uses this trait as the basis of all Milton's actions, the fountainhead of his politics and poetry alike.

He points out that the familiar epistles, in the style of Cicero, show a man with a sense of personal dignity so great that he speaks of himself "with an epical stateliness of phrase" resembling the "reverence paid by other men to a far-off and idealized character." This supreme egotism, apparent even in the poet's youth, can be seen in his sonnet "When the Assault was intended to the City." Masson found a "mood of jest or semi-jest" in the poem, but Lowell considers it only natural that Milton should calmly assume his equality with Pindar and Euripides. He then explains Milton's failure to enter the army by the Puritan's idea of himself as a divinely inspired writer who chose to wield the pen as a sacred weapon in the Great Rebellion. Lowell carefully points out, however, that Milton's prose writings have no value other than historical interest. He says that all of the Puritan's political opinions were shaped according to his immediate interests; hence they are strictly occasional. Only the "white heat of personal conviction" made Milton the equal of his political antagonists.

His self-consciousness, always active, identified him with the cause he undertook. Accordingly, it does not so much seem that he is the advocate of Puritanism, Freedom of Conscience, or the People of England, as that all these are he, and that he is speaking for himself.²⁸

Thus Carlyle's opinion that Milton's self-consciousness limited his value as a poet is, in Lowell's view, applied to Milton's role as a political writer. He goes on to add that sometimes the prose shows to an inferior degree the qualities of Milton's poetry, and this gives it merit. The prose does not, however, possess any value for thought, reasoning, or

statement of ideas.

Although Milton was by nature an egoist, Lowell stresses the effect of Hebrew literature on his mind. He maintains that the English translation of the Bible "Judaized" the Puritan temper; the Puritans, "those fierce enthusiasts," found it convenient to look upon their enemies as Philistines. As the "spiritual provincialism of the Jewish race" was especially congenial to the English mind, Milton's personal egotism was extremely sympathetic with the national egotism of the Hebrew prophets. "It was only as an inspired and irresponsible person that he could live on decent terms with his own self-confident individuality." Yet Milton's egotism was not intolerable; he did not subordinate the sun to his own watch fob. His was an intolerant but noble egotism which identified itself with omnipotence. The poet's sublimity was its own apology.

Continuing to emphasize Milton's egotism, Lowell asserts that the best passages in the prose and poetry are autobiographic. It would seem that the experiences from the poet's own life inspired him to a greater intensity of expression. Pushing his analysis of the poetry into psychological subtleties, Lowell obviously disagrees with Taine as he says that the biographic elements in Paradise Lost are "unconsciously so." He says that the fallen angels "in utter ruin and combustion hurled" are the cavaliers of Charles I "fighting against the Good Old Cause...." (Taine had seen them as Puritan refugees). The Philistines in Samson Agonistes represent the Restoration courtiers, and Milton unconsciously identified

himself with Samson. The Puritan poet vicariously participated in the actions of his Hebrew champion, and "what Samson did, that Milton would have done if he could." In more general terms, he says that since Milton withdrew into the "fortress of his absolute personality," he was never possessed by his theme as other poets, rather his theme was always John Milton. Always self-possessed, he made the deity not a school-divine, as Pope said, but a mere mouthpiece for his own theology. If this seems like derogatory criticism, it may be noted that Lowell identifies this "audacity of self-reliance" as an essential component of the sublime. The danger lies, he says, in falling short of greatness and becoming ridiculous. Milton's contact with great events during the middle period of his life, the inspiration he received from the "noble purposes" of the Puritan cause, only enhanced the "grand loneliness of his old age." It is this that impresses us about the man and his poetry. The "sublime independence of human sympathy" which marked his personal character throughout his life was directly expressed in his last great poems. Paradise Lost is the true monument to English Puritanism, a poem kindled by Milton's passionate regret for his lost cause.

Concomitant with Milton's egotism and deriving from it is the stateliness, the magnificent dignity which marks his poetry. Lowell shows unqualified respect for Milton as an artist: his unsurpassed blank verse, his phrases of "towering port," the verses that "march with resounding tread...." These aspects of Milton's poetic genius, together with his

"great feeling for vastness" show the cosmic sweep of his imagination. Lowell relates the imagination to the egotism in noting that Paradise Lost gives the reader a "feeling of spaciousness" offered by no other poet. He feels that Milton's self-respect rose almost to veneration when he composed his epic. The great dignity never fails:

Observe at what a reverent distance he begins when he is about to speak of himself, as at the beginning of the Third Book and the Seventh. His sustained strength is especially felt in his beginnings...the poem never becomes incoherent; we feel all through it, as in the symphonies of Beethoven, a great controlling reason in whose safe conduct we trust implicitly.²⁹

He names Samson Agonistes as the finest poem in the language in the quality of "austere dignity." No other poet so skillfully generalized his personal experience into a classical tragedy. This agrees with Masson's view that Milton did not permit the subjective element to intrude upon the dramatic unity. Thus, although Milton's haughty egotism entered into all of his poetry, it in no way diminished the aesthetic value. Lowell, like Emerson, finds his greatest satisfaction in recognizing the omnipresence of Milton in his works. In this sense the man and the poetry were actually inseparable.

Another critic whose primary interest in Milton was his blank verse style was John Addington Symonds, who in 1874 praised Milton's artistry by pointing out the failure of earlier critics, particularly those of the eighteenth century, to appreciate the poet's subtlety.³⁰ It would seem that Symonds' interest in the poetic style and technique of Milton would preclude the use of biographical material in the criticism; and in his analysis of meter, alliteration,

and assonance in particular passages this is true. But his central purpose is to trace the development of Milton's use of blank verse to determine the changes which may be traced in it from Comus to Samson Agonistes; in doing this he correlates the metrics with the biography.

Symonds decides that the style of Comus is closest to the Elizabethan manner in the emphasis on "sensuous qualities" although already "more complex and peculiarly harmonious, more characteristically Miltonic" elements can be seen. Yet the influence of Spenser and Fletcher comprises the most obvious characteristic of the masque with a "fluent and simple versification," fresh, sensuous imagery. What Symonds calls the "truly Miltonic licenses" are rare. Comus has fewer "inverted sentences, less lengthy systems of concatenated periods," which are elements more characteristic of Milton's mature period. The overall judgment of Comus is that it is the best product of Milton's youth: "Both in the imagery and the melody of Comus there is youthful freshness, an almost wanton display of vernal bloom and beauty."⁵¹ These qualities are not only Elizabethan, but typical of Milton in his undisturbed years preceding the Great Rebellion with its trials of faction and controversy.

Paradise Lost represents the "manhood" of Milton's art. The "elaborate metrical structure supported by rich alliteration and assonances" reached its full development in the epic with a "more rugged and abrupt sublimity" than in Comus. The same luxuriance and richness characteristic of the youthful poetry is present, but Symonds asserts that the Elizabethan

qualities have become "mellowed by age" and subdued by the "laws of abstruse and deeply studied proportion." In short, the blank verse of Paradise Lost reflects the intellectual development of the author, the mental discipline given by years of study and serious thought. Although Comus is more youthful and spontaneous, the epic shows that "the fancy... has not yet grown chill or lost luxuriance, nor has the ear become less sensitive...." Paradise Lost represents the peak of Milton's poetic genius.

In Paradise Regained, Symonds sees a marked change in the style, and, simultaneously, in the poet's character. "The master has grown older, and his taste is more severe." Comparing the style with Comus and Paradise Lost, Symonds notes the lack of alliterative "melody" and the presence of a "heavy movement" in Paradise Regained. All the "harsh inversions and rugged eccentricities of abnormally constructed" verses unalleviated by rich imagery or harmonious metrical effects point to the growing severity and austerity of the poet.³²

Symonds uses the style of Samson Agonistes, however, as the touchstone in his analysis of Milton's changed personality and verse technique. The drama is a "step beyond Paradise Regained in dryness, ruggedness, and uncompromising severity." The delightful effects of alliteration, assonance, and vivid imagery used so freely by the youthful author of Comus and the consummate artist of Paradise Lost were eliminated by a taste "ascetically grave." The style of the drama, as truly as the biography, reveals Milton in his austere old age. "In Samson Agonistes, colour and melody have lost their charm for

him, though he preserves his mighty style...." Thus the overall change in Milton's blank verse style from the date of Comus to that of Samson consisted essentially in the increasing use of "intellectual qualities" and the elimination of the "sensuous elements"; the changes in style may be traced to the changes and development of the poet's character.³³ Such criticism as Symonds's shows how the poet's personality and life had come to be integrated into literary criticism ostensibly concerned only with style and poetic technique.

In 1879, Matthew Arnold considered the criticism of Milton by Addison, Johnson, Macaulay, and Scherer while setting forth his own estimate of Milton as a man and poet.³⁴ Arnold dismisses Addison's papers on Paradise Lost as mere rhetoric of the most conventional kind - "the sort of criticism which held our grandfathers and great-grandfathers spellbound in solemn reverence." His great objection to Addison's method is that it is based on conventional assumptions of how a reader should react to the poem: "that incidents of a certain class must render a poem attractive and effective." But, he adds, if we disregard the conventions and simply ask whether these effects actually do occur, Addison's criticism collapses.

Arnold finds some merit in Johnson's criticism, especially what Arnold calls the Great Tory's lack of rhetoric and convention. He states that some of Johnson's remarks, the products of an "acute and robust mind," are very sound, while the Tory critic's estimate of Milton's character, though somewhat distorted, contains much truth. Arnold shares Johnson's view that Milton was "severe and arbitrary" in his domes-

tic life, stating that this portrayal is more accurate than Macaulay's unblemished and very deceptive portrait. But in spite of Johnson's critical abilities, Arnold considers him "neither sufficiently disinterested nor sufficiently flexible" to be a satisfactory critic of Milton's poetry.

Macaulay is Arnold's chief target; and he fares rather badly, as does Milton, when Arnold attempts to pull down the heroic figure erected by the Whigs to substitute a portrait he believes more truthful. His charge is simple but devastating: Macaulay simply did not intend in the first place to tell the truth about Milton's character as a man. The famous Edinburgh Review essay contains no true criticism -- only rhetorical panegyric on Milton and Puritanism. Macaulay's picture of a man of admirable temper, "sedate and majestic patience," and freedom from asperity brings forth this retort: "All this is just what an ardent admirer of the Puritan cause and of Milton would most wish to hear, and when he hears it he is in ecstasies." Though his view of Milton as a man is not as forbidding as Johnson's, Arnold gives to the poet what he considers the most disagreeable characteristics of the Puritans:

If there is a defect which, above all others, is signal in Milton, which injures him intellectually, which limits him even as a poet, it is the defect common to him with the whole Puritan party to which he belonged, - the fatal defect of temper. He and they may have a thousand merits, but they are unamiable.³⁵

He believes that a foreign critic like Scherer would be better qualified to deal with a controversial figure like Milton simply because he would not be likely to have a strong

bias for or against Puritanism or the poet's political and religious views. Consequently he commends Scherer's "open-mindedness," his "firmness and sureness of judgment," but he disagrees with the French critic's assertion that a sound historical-biographical approach would produce spontaneously a just understanding of the poet's work. To support this he cites Macaulay, who was well-acquainted with Milton's life and period, but certainly did not reach a true understanding on any point. Arnold approves of a "disinterested" approach but is skeptical of Scherer's guarantee of certain results.

Regarding Arnold's own opinions of Milton's character, it should be noted first that he is unsympathetic to the man as well as to his politics and religious views. The prose works are described as "miserable discussions" for the most part; he adds that when Milton wrote Paradise Lost he did not leave "the old man of these 'miserable discussions' behind." The critic's antipathy to Puritanism is obvious throughout. He does not go as far as Scherer in condemning all religious material as unsuitable for poetry, but he considers "the inevitable matter of a Puritan epic" of very great difficulty for any poet. This derives from Arnold's objections to Puritanism as a rigidly narrow mode of thought which stresses only one side of man's nature, the moral side. He continually stresses in his criticism the need for a free play of thought, open-mindedness, and "spontaneity of consciousness." These are the very qualities which he points out as lacking in Puritanism; and we may assume, in Paradise Lost, the Puritan epic. In Arnold's view, Milton's subject matter in the epic

was disagreeable and unsatisfactory, but he does add that Milton has not been sufficiently commended for handling the Puritan dogma as well as he did.

As a Puritan, Milton was "isolated and all sufficient"; moral obedience was his prime concern. His ill-temper and unamiable egotism further isolated him from vicarious sympathy with the lives of others. How, then, we are led to ask, is Milton to retain his status as a great poet by Matthew Arnold's exacting requirements? It seems that this was a problem to Arnold. He attempts to solve it by formulating a strictly literary character for Milton on the Johnsonian order. Thus the "Milton of religious and political controversy" is sharply separated from the "Milton of poetry"; the man is divorced from the poet. Milton the poet was great but modest, sincerely dedicated to his art, and, perhaps most important in Arnold's eyes, one who lived in "constant companionship with high and rare excellence, with the great Hebrew poets and prophets, with the great poets of Greece and Rome."

The Milton of poetry is the man, in his own magnificent phrase, of 'devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases.'³⁶

This praise relates directly to Arnold's citation of Milton as the greatest example of an English poet possessing the "grand style" - that manner of poetic expression which arises when "a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject."³⁷ As an exponent of the grand style Milton is unrivalled. The importance of this praise can only be fully realized when we understand

Arnold's emphasis on rhythm and diction in poetry. He believes that the "soul" of power in poetry rests in the style and that this power actively exerts a "refining and elevating" effect on the reader. It may be noted that Arnold does not mention the religious subject, the sacred personages, or Milton's didactic intentions in Paradise Lost as contributing to the elevation and refinement of the nation. The idea of "purification" in the above quotation would mean in less emotive terms the improvement of taste and morals through direct contact with Milton's sublime manner of expression. As Landor did previously, Arnold separates the matter treated in the epic from the manner or style, and as De Quincey he attributes to the blank verse of Paradise Lost the power of raising and refining the reader's sensibility above its normal level. He states that this elevating effect is felt by the reader, though not necessarily consciously understood. It constitutes Milton's chief virtue as a poet and sets him apart from all other writers.

The definition of the grand style stipulates a "noble nature"; Milton's noble nature, according to Arnold, resided in his purity, the moral quality which gave elevation to the style. But of kindness, the other great Christian virtue, Milton had very little:

In kindness, and in all which the work conveys or suggests, Milton does not shine. He has the temper of his Puritan party. We often hear the boast, on behalf of the Puritans, that they produced 'our great epic poet.' Alas! one might not unjustly retort that they spoiled him. However, let Milton bear his own burden; in his temper he had natural affinities with the Puritans. He has paid for it by his limitations as a poet.³⁸

Arnold distinguishes two types of the grand style in literature: the simple and the severe. Milton is the best model of the severe style, which points to the "great personality, to the noble nature, in the poet its author...."³⁹ Paradise Lost was written with a kind of intense compression, or in an "allusive, brief, almost haughty way, as if the poet's mind were charged with so many grave matters that he would not deign to treat any of them explicitly." It is difficult to say if this idea is based entirely on Arnold's idea of Milton's character since the definition of the severe grand style was meant to fit other poets as well. Obviously the reference to the "great personality" would apply to Milton's purity and the elements of his literary character. But the phrase "almost haughty way of expression" might well allude to the unamiable character of the man. It may be noted at this point that the moral improvement to be derived from Milton's poetry is in no way associated with the religious poet or the patriotic defender of liberty. While earlier critics had stressed the nobility of Milton's political and religious activity, Arnold emphasizes the purity of his poetic style.

In Arnold's criticism we see the concepts of the sacred poet and the champion of English liberty replaced by an exclusive interest in Milton as a poet, and what is even more limited, as an exponent of style, albeit the grand style. That this represents a decline in the Miltonic tradition, a weakening of the poet's hold on his long-held position as the second greatest of English poets is obvious. For a fame based on poetic style divorced from the subject matter of the

poetry and the personal character of the poet is at best an unsure, shaky foundation subject to collapse when the "grand style" itself is replaced by other critical standards.

In his biography of Milton (1879), Mark Pattison compressed him into the Massonic mold, but without the severe austerity which had become a familiar tag attached to the poet's Puritanism.⁴⁰ Pattison emphasizes Milton's haughty egotism together with the proud, reserved, self-contained manner which isolated him from his contemporaries. He portrays him as intently brooding over his own ideas while showing little sympathy with the opinions of others. Noting Milton's lofty cast of thought and obviously admiring his solemn self-dedication and preparation to become a great poet -- what Pattison calls his "conscious moral architecture" -- he stresses Milton's quick sensibility, the true characteristic of the poetic temperament. Milton's mental isolation was in part the result of his "moral tenacity" which could endure no encroachment on his rather narrow line of thought; although he had great respect for the great men of his day, he showed no understanding of ordinary people. The man that Pattison would have us know in order to fully understand and appreciate the poetry is thus a lofty egoist who early dedicated himself to poetry; a somewhat disdainful politician who was always absolutely sure of his own cause and the purity of his motives; a solemn, devout, and intensely subjective poet. Pattison makes no attempt to separate these components as Arnold did. He approaches Milton as a man, and the man is the poet. The close connection between the biography and the

literary criticism may be illustrated by this statement:

Milton's life is a drama in three acts. The first discovers him in the calm and peaceful retirement of Horton, of which L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Lycidas are the expression. In the second act he is breathing the foul and heated atmosphere of party passion and religious hate, generating the lurid fires which glare in the battailous canticles of his prose pamphlets. The three great poems, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes, are the utterance of his final period of solitary and Promethean grandeur, when, blind, destitute, friendless, he testified of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, alone before a fallen world.⁴¹

As interpreted by Pattison, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso show a youthful spontaneity which Milton never showed again in his poetry. This was due to the increasing solemnity of his character as he grew older and the strong influence of Puritanism on his personality. The two idylls form a sharp contrast to the more austere tone of his later poems. These have the freedom and abandon of Elizabethan lyrics. However, Pattison's praise of the companion poems is paled by his statement that Lycidas is the "high-water mark" in English poetry and the best of Milton's productions. The elegy shows a new vein of Milton's character -- deeper feeling, high and vehement patriotic passion blended with idealized touches of rural life. He states that for the reader to fully appreciate the poem he must know the conditions in England in 1637, and, if possible, place himself in the position of a contemporary.⁴² The poem is the touchstone of what has gone before and what is to follow in Milton's poetry: "Milton's original picturesque vein is for the first time crossed with one of quite another sort, stern, determined, obscurely indicative of suppressed passion, and the resolution to do or die." Pattison definitely

makes the point, however, that these two extremes in Milton's character did not conflict; they blended into one harmonious whole under the genius of the poet. This idea sets his criticism apart from that of Taine, Scherer, and Seeley.

Of the sonnets Pattison has little to say, other than his appreciation for their simplicity of language which gives them a "homely and prosaic" quality. Actually he considers the sonnets as part of the poet's biography rather than as poems in their own right. Yet he feels that when they are placed in their historical context, they illustrate the superiority of real emotion over revived emotion or recollected feelings to achieve poetic effect. The "actuality" of the sonnets is what Pattison admires most, yet he claims that they are more a part of Milton's "political side" than his poetic nature. "They are akin to the prose pamphlets, not to Paradise Lost."⁴³

In spite of his very low opinion of Milton's activities during the middle period of his life, Pattison feels that it is questionable whether or not he would have attained his strength and restraint of poetic expression if he had not participated in political controversies. If the poet shows the "fatigue of age" in Paradise Regained, the author of Paradise Lost, reveals the experience of maturity blended with the passionate strength of youth. Pattison does not use explicit biographical material in his criticism of Paradise Lost, but he does investigate at length Milton's reasons for choosing the subject, concluding that he could not write of historical events because of his lack of sympathy with "common life."

His great personality demanded real, substantial events and persons which would be familiar to many English readers without descending to scenes of common life. No choice was left but a Biblical subject. He chose the Genesis story because he believed it to be absolutely true on every point; it suited his high purpose as no other subject could. Pattison states that a reader can never understand either Milton or his later poems until he realizes that the poet firmly believed the subjects of his last poems to be based on concrete fact. Milton's character would not tolerate airy fantasies or make-believe; his opinion of his poetic powers was too great to waste them on unreal or insignificant matters.⁴⁴

Pattison dismisses Paradise Regained as a paraphrase of the Temptation. The story does not interest; the entire composition is "dry, hard, and barren," and the characters are abstractions. The frigidity of the poem he attributes to Milton's age, or, perhaps, the poet's attempt to treat a Biblical subject without ornament or ostentation. Pattison feels that the "severe abstinence" of the style was pushed too far.

The biographical interpretation of Samson Agonistes, in Pattison's view, helps to save it from being a "tame, flat, meaningless, and artificial" drama. It must be read as a page from Milton's biography and the history of the time to become interesting. He says that it does not really matter that the parallel between Samson and Milton does not hold exactly true; the similarity is in the "sentiment and situation," not in the bare fact. As a parable of the author's life in the Restoration, he finds the drama charged with pathos; but even

this cannot rescue it from being "nerveless, occasionally halting, never brilliant." The simplicity of style shows a failure of Milton's poetic force which made Paradise Lost a unique monument.⁴⁵

In 1880, Edward Dowden outlined his method of literary criticism as a biographical study which would emphasize equally the author's life and works and seek to collate the two.⁴⁶ He would try to interpret "each in and through the other" to arrive at a full understanding and appreciation of both. Pointing out that such criticism is simpler when the author's genius is not dramatic, Dowden finds it easier to discover Milton in Comus or Samson Agonistes than to discover Shakespeare in Othello or Macbeth. Dowden's criticism rests almost wholly on the biography; not "certain fragments of Milton," but the "whole man" he would use in the interpretation of the poetry.

While noting that such methods may be misused since no one can be reduced to a formula, Dowden proceeds to develop his own ideas of Milton's character as a "whole man."⁴⁷ In the first place, he portrays Milton as self-conscious; he almost goes so far as to say that the poet never performed an unpremeditated action. As his life was carefully planned and regulated, so his poetry was always unspontaneous and deliberate. Like the period in which he reached maturity, Milton consciously moved away from the bright spirit of the Elizabethan period when intellect and imagination had broken "the medieval dykes and dams...." From the prose works Dowden decides that the principle of liberty dominated his "outer life" of action; the prose represents the direct expression

of the "controlling idea of liberty." On the other hand, Milton's "inner life" was centered around another idea, a single chief tendency which was expressed in his poetry:

Milton's inner life, of which his poetry is an expression, as his prose is an expression of his outer, public life, was an unceasing tending from evil to good, from base or common to noble, a perpetual aspiration to moral greatness.⁴⁸

This is Dowden's statement of the "idealism" which is the key to the character and the poetry. He states that to Milton the world was as a battlefield, "life was a warfare against principalities and powers, and the good man a champion of God." The sense of sin never left him; nor did the "glorious possibility of virtue." Above all else the poet feared rebellion against God and a consequent hell; nature represented a constant struggle between good and evil. In other words, he says, "Milton was essentially a Puritan." Despite his great knowledge of classical culture and his Renaissance sense of beauty, he was as much a Puritan as Bunyan. This is the matrix of the man's personality to which Dowden relates the poetry: Milton as a Puritan idealist.

Thus Comus is defined as the "dramatic play" of Milton's own poetical abstractions, revealing the young poet intensely concerned with his own ideals of beauty and virtue and "zealous to exhibit the identity of moral loveliness with moral severity." The characters in the masque lose their identity as people and become identified with the poet's ideals. The Lady resembles the youthful Milton:

...we may well believe that the great debate concerning temperance was not altogether dramatic (where, indeed, is Milton truly dramatic?), but was in part a

record of passages in the poet's own spiritual history. Milton admired the Lady as he admired the ideal which he projected before him of himself.⁴⁹

It is difficult to see how the biography could be used to a greater extent in this interpretation of Comus.

Dowden interprets Paradise Lost on the same biographical principle. The central idea he states as the struggle between good and evil which dominated Milton's inner life. Satan, the spirit of disobedience, in active rebellion against God, is an ideal conception symbolizing this idea in the poet's mind. As Milton was deeply concerned to provide himself and others with a moral rule of life, he declared his intention to "assert eternal Providence" in his epic. Dowden points out that by the time Paradise Lost was written, Milton "had known love as distinct from admiration...." In the process of discovering the attractions of women, he had also discovered their essential frailty. While the Lady in Comus was created from elements of his personal character, Eve was made from "all that he was not and could not be." Thus while the Lady was admirable, Eve was wholly desirable. Eve represents a kind of "abstract woman," Milton's conception of the "eternal feminine" in nature. As disobedience and its fatal results provided Milton with the theme for Paradise Lost, Dowden suggests that the idea of Christ's perfect obedience made the subject of Paradise Regained wholly compatible with Milton's idealism. Further, the story of the temptation in the wilderness gave the poet, essentially undramatic, certain advantages. He was skillful in presenting "characters in position, and more particularly in the discussion of a topic by two charac-

ters who occupy fixed and opposing points of view." Such scenes, he states, are not dialogues, but debates or duels between the antagonists. Paradise Regained, like Comus, is a series of debates in the "Miltonic manner...." To Dowden, the Miltonic manner means representation of antagonism between good and evil.

In Samson Agonistes occurs again the struggle between good and evil, the idea which identified Milton with the Puritan cause and dominated his adult mind. Samson and the people of God oppose the Philistines, Dalila, and Harapha. The character of Samson, as the Lady, was created from Milton's own character and inner experience.

But as the beautiful youth, a poet more than a fighter, full of noble hopes and unrealized aspirations, differed from the aged man who had warred a good warfare, who had known disappointment and defeat, and now was fallen on evil days, so widely does Samson differ from Milton's first glad ideal.⁵⁰

And though the transformation is strange, the same personality is discernible in both poems. Samson resembles Milton further in his self-contemplation. Like Milton, he looked upon his great powers as something entrusted to him by God. Dowden states that if Milton "had ever been betrayed into a weakness as that of Samson, he would have felt precisely as Samson feels." He finds the contrast between Samson and Harapha remarkable. Samson represents the Puritan ideal of a man entrusted with divine strength; Harapha, the Philistine giant, is Milton's idea of "fleshly strength of this world, insolent and brutal." Dowden asserts that after the Restoration it was Harapha (an abstract Miltonic idea of a type of

man) who destroyed the bodies of Cromwell and Bradshaw.

Dalila stands for everything in women that Milton considered detestable.

Shakespeare would have smiled, and secretly accepted the enchantress as a fruitful subject of study. Milton brings her upon the scene only to expose her, and drive her away with the most genuine indignation.⁵¹

In comparison with Masson's treatment of Samson Agonistes as a crude political allegory, Dowden's critical method is subtler but certainly equally liable to objection. For to interpret the poetry as various treatments of one single idea -- that the struggle between good and evil is the prime fact of life -- is to limit sharply the scope and significance of the poetry, however satisfactory the result in fulfilling the requirements of a particular critical system.

Algernon Charles Swinburne entered the ring of Milton criticism somewhat like a gladiator squaring off to defend the royal purple.⁵² Strangely enough (and Swinburne himself seems surprised) his opponent was William Rossetti, pre-Raphaelite with republican sympathies. Rossetti aroused Swinburne's ire with a single statement about Milton: "Honour is the predominant emotion naturally felt towards Milton -- hardly enthusiasm -- certainly not sympathy." Coming at a time when Masson, Bagehot, and others had popularized the conception of Milton as an austere, unsympathetic Puritan, Rossetti's statement is hardly surprising and certainly not unusual in this period. But Swinburne is both surprised and shocked. His reply, though brief, is as brilliant a piece of rhetorical panegyric as any of the poet's earlier defenders

had supplied when political controversy was inevitably attached to his name. First Swinburne exonerates Milton's personal character by sanctifying him in a manner somewhat incongruously reminiscent of the New England critics. His reply to Rossetti is worth quoting:

Sympathy, indeed, we may well feel that we are hardly worthy to offer: for the very word implies some assumption of moral or spiritual equality; and he must indeed be confident of having always acted up to Milton's own ideal, and ever 'made of his own life a heroic poem' who remembering this could think himself worthy to feel sympathy with the action and passions of such lives as Milton's More reasonably may we feel as it were a righteous and a reverent delight in the sense of an inferiority which does not disable or deprive us of the capacity for adoration: a rapture of lowliness which exalts humility itself into something like the gladness of pride -- of pride that we can feel and exultation that we may acknowledge how high above us are men who yet are not too high for the loyal thanks offering, not only of our worship, but surely also of our love.⁵³

Swinburne's attitude is not far removed from the early Edinburgh Reviewer's reverential decision to "prostrate ourselves before him." Swinburne idolizes everything about Milton: his piety, his politics, his poetry. It is difficult to separate the different attitudes towards the man and the poetry; they are fused, as it were, into indiscriminating panegyric which moves from Milton's character to his writings with no obvious division. The defence of the man extends to Paradise Regained when Swinburne supports Milton's statement that he preferred the later poem to Paradise Lost. Indeed, he places over Paradise Lost as "a poem or complete work of art," while giving the earlier epic priority in "episodical excellence -- in splendour of separate points and exaltation

of separate passages."

When he turns to Samson Agonistes, Swinburne attacks Johnson and Macaulay as two critics who have by "perverse persistency" completely misjudged the drama. This "most majestic and pathetic" of all Milton's poems, he says, has seldom received its deserving tribute. He cites Landor as one critic who did give to Samson praise consistent with its merit.

Reminiscences of many sad afflictions have already burst upon the poet, but instead of overwhelming him they have endued him with redoubled might and majesty. Verses worthier of a sovran poet, sentiments worthier of a pure, indomitable, inflexible, republican, never issued from the human heart than these...⁵⁴

As Landor had done forty years earlier, Swinburne derives much of his appreciation for Samson from the portrait of Milton as the great surviving republican, the true spokesman for the Commonwealth. The above quotation refers to the following lines from Samson:

Had Judah that day joined, or one whole tribe,
They had by this possessed the tower of Gath,
And lorded over them whom now they serve;
But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty;
And to despise, or envy, or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favor raised
As their deliverer; if he aught begin,
How frequent to desert him, and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds?

Such passages as these, "referring to the army, in the last effort made to rescue the English nation from disgrace and servitude," make Milton the great representative figure of the Commonwealth. In his poetry, Milton glorified that

period, while the dictator Cromwell destroyed it. As Milton grew calmer in his later years, he came to realize the faults of Cromwell. Then he became perfectly fitted to preserve in his works the "highest and most perfect type of the English republic...." The "glorious republican", equalled on all points the indomitable poet who wrote of his lost cause.

Yet it is not only in politics that Swinburne finds Milton eminently suited to be a great poet. In "private matters" or ethics he places the republican far above Dante. He states that "the instinct of Milton seems to me as much truer and finer than the instinct of Dante as his judgment and his conscience were juster, sounder, purer than the conscience or judgment of Cromwell." Such references to Dante are obviously aimed to refute Rossetti's panegyric on that poet, but Swinburne's sincerity towards Milton can hardly be doubted. In sweeping statements he exonerates him of almost every charge that was brought against him: his egotism, his self-respect, his controversial invective in the political pamphlets, his self-consciousness are turned into fresh virtues which add new lustre to Milton's character. Swinburne is determined to make his republican ideal into a Titanic figure "married to immortal verse." But in this respect he was moving against the current of critical opinion.

In a brief but interesting review of Masson's Life (1881), Herbert New attempted to clarify Milton's place in English thought and his contribution to the nation's cultural heritage.⁵⁵ He perceptively observes that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century "Milton has scarcely passed out of

the sphere of party; and while in such a sphere, sections of party will set up their peculiar claims to him." Obviously a political liberal himself, he points out that the Puritan poet can never be identified with any cause not based on "the broadest grounds of personal liberty" and adds that even those most opposed to his political views have freely acknowledged his position as the second of English poets. Milton appeals directly to "all liberal Englishmen" as the true spokesman of the Commonwealth, that period which gave rise to the principles of civil and religious liberty in England. He considers the prose works as essentially concerned with freedom and as framing an inextricable part of the "intellectual life-blood of England." Yet in spite of Milton's almost universal acceptance as a great poet and his ever-increasing fame as the spokesman for true liberty, New asserts that the "rigid, anti-sacerdotal," essentially Protestant elements of Milton's personality still prevent his complete acceptance by Anglicans and Catholics, but this evidently refers to Milton's reputation as a man. Yet the Puritanism brands him as an heretic and distinctly limits his appeal as a poet to many readers who can accept Shakespeare's artistry without qualification or bias based on biographical material. Actually there are "two Miltons" to be considered, and the critic regrets that many readers at this late date are still unable to reconcile them satisfactorily.

The critic exalts Milton as "the voice of England in her great period of religious freedom and republican government" and uses this attitude as the base for his brief con-

sideration of the poetry. As earlier Whig periodical writers had done, he maintains that the controversial middle years of the poet's career were necessary to his full poetic development. If Milton had withdrawn from public life or refused to take the side of "civil and religious rights" in the Great Rebellion, he could not possibly have written his greatest poems:

A life withdrawn from the public life of his country at such a time, and selfishly devoted to literary aims however high and praiseworthy in themselves, could not have issued in the production of "Paradise Lost," could at best but have produced an idle song...and have added to the many forgotten epics of second-rate poets whose utterances have no connection with the spirit of their own or any other age.⁵⁶

Despite his statement that there are two Miltons to be considered, politician and poet, New attempts to make the Puritan all of one piece. Thus he finds the poet throughout the political pamphlets which show "that the poet never wholly put off his singing robes, though the utterances were not clothed in verse, and were but the ornaments and exuberances of a controversial writer earnestly engaged in the pressing questions of the hour." He states that Milton never forgot his self-dedicated mission as a poet even during his most heated controversies. New stresses the controversial years and the marriage to Mary Powell as great trials to the poet's "imaginary career or pure contemplation...." Both events were disturbances which placed his "sublime notion and high mystery" of personal purity under severe trial, but Milton's great character was strengthened and fortified by the most unfortunate experiences. These effects on his character are

reflected in the poems of his old age.

Since New is primarily concerned with Milton's role as the prophetic voice of English liberty, it is perhaps to be expected that he would stress these aspects in the poetry. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that "the spirit of liberty" in Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes has been the primary factor in making the poems immortal to English readers. The reformer and liberator of humanity who appears in the prose tracts is equally evident in the later poems. Like Emerson, the critic is less concerned with the poems as works of art than as revelations of the author's great personality. These works are the triumphant culmination of Milton's own idea of his "portion in this life"; though tried in temper, encumbered with blindness, his strong and vigorous spirit was always "inspired with a divine fullness of life." New's admiration for Milton's last years borders on hero-worship. He finds nothing to pity; even the blindness, he points out, as referred to in Samson and Paradise Lost reveals no wailing of misery. The very personal passages rather show his great "sense of the glory of sight, sometimes mingled with abounding gratitude for the 'inner light' which compensated for his loss." New concludes with Masson's statement that Milton is the true genius of English Puritanism -- a relationship which bestows great honor upon both the poet and his sect.

George Saintsbury approached Milton in 1887 as a poet whose character it was necessary to understand fully in order to fully comprehend his poetry.⁵⁷ His presentation of Milton

as a man, like Matthew Arnold's, shows how far the later nineteenth century critics had moved towards Johnson's antagonistic position. Saintsbury portrays the poet as an arrogant egoist with a "singular want of adaptability in politics and social matters generally, which has been admitted even by sympathisers with his political and religious views." One facet of Milton's personality which Saintsbury stresses is his lack of experience in life, the fact that he lived in "books and fancy" and this, with his natural aloofness, alienated him still further from other people. Yet Saintsbury states that Milton's asceticism and morose temperament have been exaggerated although he was not an amiable man. The very intensity of his personal convictions of political and religious questions "almost necessitated a certain asperity." Unlike Arnold, Saintsbury does not attribute Milton's unpleasant personal traits to his association with the Puritans. They are individual characteristics of the man, not of a particular sect.

It is not apparent that Saintsbury's opinion of Milton's character affected his appreciation of the poetry. Though he interprets the poet as an unsympathetic man, his praise for the poetry is almost unqualified. He states:

...the positive quality of poetry is in and over them all, from first to last, unmistakable by those who have been born or taught to recognize it.⁵⁸

L'Allegro and Il Penseroso exhibit Milton's "almost unsurpassable combination of bookishness and natural imagination, the art of phrase which still has all the gracefulness of youth... the whole suffused with a temper which is soft

even when sad, and which never jars or thorn-crackles even at its most mirthful." Of Comus, he says that it "would be difficult to find a poem where profit and delight are more perfectly blended." Lycidas, as an elegy, has no superior in the language. Of the sonnets, Saintsbury states that nowhere is Milton's tendency to be autobiographical shown in a more interesting way. The sonnet "To the Nightingale" presents a "Miltonic person who might have developed very differently." Saintsbury here refers to Milton's youth when he was under the Renaissance influence, unaffected by religious controversy, and political faction which brought out his later austerity. The other side of Milton's personality -- "the side which did develop" -- appears in Sonnet VII, "On His Having Arrived At The Age of Twenty-Three" and "foretells the compensations for the loss of the less austere personage." Saintsbury's overall estimate of the sonnets is that they are "great poetry" which provide invaluable insight into Milton's character and the later poems.

Saintsbury's criticism of Paradise Lost corresponds on some points to Arnold, though he does not condemn the subject or theology. He states that the "sustained magnificence" of Milton's poetic conception and treatment "in the solemn and serious way," cannot be denied. The epic is "alone in its kind of greatness."

As regards form, it practically endowed English with a new medium for great non-dramatic poetry: what, at the very time of its completion, was being pronounced 'too mean for a copy of verses', was made great enough for the greatest poem. As regards spirit, we find the loftiest height of argument, the

most gorgeous description, action not extremely varied but nobly managed, character not much individualised but sufficiently adapted to the action, above all, a suffused imaginative dignity, not merely unsurpassed, but unparalleled elsewhere.⁵⁹

The qualities in the poetry which can be definitely traced to the poet's personality are the dignity and high seriousness together with the intense emotion which Milton brought to everything he wrote. The great asceticism of the man, described by Masson and Bagehot, however, is played down by Saintsbury; he supports this statement by citing the Lawrence and Skinner sonnets and the magic banquet scene in Paradise Regained. Of the latter poem he states that the subject was of "sufficient epical contingency" to Milton with his semi-Arian views." For purely poetic value, he says, "Paradise Regained is little inferior to its predecessor."

Saintsbury, perhaps purposely qualifying Masson's interpretation, is very careful in drawing a comparison between Milton and Samson. He admits that there is a striking parallel of the Hebrew champion and the Puritan poet and that Milton, with his "strong autobiographical tendency" made the resemblance even more evident. The biographical elements Saintsbury notes in the drama are the "blindness, the triumph of political enemies, the failing strength and closing life, the unbroken and undaunted resolution." But Saintsbury does not push his analysis as far as Masson in identifying characters in the drama with particular contemporaries of Milton. He notes that it is unnecessary to identify Mary Powell with Dalila. The cases cannot be made to correspond "by the utmost violence or the most perverted ingenuity."⁶⁰

He adds that the poet did bring "that combination of susceptibility to feminine charms and distrustful revolt against them which is thoroughly Miltonic." Finally, he states that "the whole tissue of situations is worked into similarity, now actual, now allegoric."

Like Symonds, he describes the style and versification as showing that "drooping of the genial spirits" which occurred in his later years. Both are "harder and stiffer." But the abundant recompense Saintsbury finds for the loss of the "bloomy flush of life" is Milton's great art -- "More imposing than ever, if less graceful." The essential differences between the interpretations of Saintsbury and Masson are that Saintsbury, while admitting the importance of biography for full understanding, emphasizes Milton's artistry in the "grand style." The "peculiar moral atmosphere" which pervades the later poems and makes them thoroughly "Miltonic." Thus, in spite of Saintsbury's unpleasant portrait of Milton as a man -- including his roles as father, husband, pamphleteer, and citizen -- he finds great qualities in the poet's character -- the same qualities which distinguish the poems and make them "Miltonic."⁶¹

Yet Saintsbury gives his final praise to Samson as a work of art; from the literary view alone, the drama is of "the highest interest and the greatest beauty." If we knew nothing of Milton's life, Samson would stand alone as a representation of "really great action and high passion" appealing to "the eternal human interests."

Within a three year period, H. M. Percival and A. W.

Verity edited separate editions of Samson Agonistes (in 1889 and 1892) and set forth their interpretations of Milton's drama. Percival's criticism revolves almost entirely around the biography; in this respect it may be said that he uses facts from the poet's life and times, as well as his own opinion of Milton's character, even more than Masson did in his explication of the drama.⁶²

In contrast to Paradise Regained, which shows a "tone of confidence in the future vindication of the Puritan cause," Percival notices an obvious "extinction of hope and the weariness of life" in Samson and concludes from this internal evidence that it was written last. Like Masson, Percival thinks that Milton was drawn to the subject of the Hebrew champion by the correspondence of his situation to Samson's. Of the frequent political and personal allusions he finds, Percival emphasizes the downfall of Puritanism, Milton's unhappy marriage to Mary Powell, and his loss of eyesight. He gives much attention to the "striking resemblance" between Samson and the Puritan poet. In this unprecedented biographical interpretation of the drama, Percival catalogues almost every major aspect of Milton's adult life and finds a parallel in the story of the Hebrew hero:

...the most striking resemblance is that between Samson and Milton himself. Milton's blindness; his life of temperance and abstemiousness, like that of the Nazarites; his unhappy marriage with Mary Powell, the daughter of a Royalist; his championship of the Puritan cause, to which he had consecrated twenty years of the prime of life; the coldness with which his single-handed efforts in this cause was received by England; the unmerited neglect, bringing with it poverty

and disease, into which he fell, when that cause was lost at the Restoration; England no longer to him the beloved land of his patriotism, but in the possession of the Philistines, and he a stranger in it surrounded by foes; his hopes crushed and his faculties drooping; his career ended and his presentiment of approaching death, the deliverer: -- all are referred to under the character of Samson...⁶³

He states that these biographical elements give to Samson an interest and "power to move human sympathy" which to the most "skillfully constructed work of dramatic art could never command for itself."

He agrees with Masson that Dalila's character was based on Milton's relations with Mary Powell, but adds that the parallel should not be pushed so far as to represent Samson's repulse of Dalila as Milton's "own first pulse of resentment" towards his first wife. Moreover, the drama not only gives a "veiled presentment" of Milton's tragic life but allegorizes the ruined Puritan cause in terms too obvious to be ignored. Thus Samson represents the fallen Puritan ideal while the Philistines represent the triumphant Royalists in 1660. Dalila is the personified Restoration "which had sought in vain to allure and win over Milton...." Percival goes on to say that the Philistine festival typifies the "godless and dissolute manners of the Restoration Court, while Manoa's prediction of a free Israel "finds a distant parallel" in the Glorious Revolution which was to end "the Stuart tyranny and licence...."

Besides these general parallels, Percival traces the following particular facts and events of the poet's life in the drama:

...to Cromwell as the deliverer of 'the saints' from oppression (ll. 1270 ff.); to the favourable

attitude of men in power like Monk towards the Restoration, and to Milton's single-handed efforts to oppose this event, and retrieve the Puritan cause (ll. 241 ff.); to General Lambert's efforts against Monk's designs, the want of support that these efforts met with at the hands of Parliament (1659), and his imprisonment (1662), (ll. 272 ff.); to the efforts made to secure Milton's safety at the Restoration by including his name in the Indemnity Bill of August, 1660, and to the varying degrees of favour with which these efforts were received by the different shades of political parties then in power (ll. 1457 ff.); to the degraded tastes of the English court and of the English stage (ll. 1323 ff.) and to the unbridled passions of the nobility and clergy, and of the common people (ll. 1418 ff.).⁶⁴

Percival's final estimate presents Samson Agonistes as the Puritan poet's noble protest against all the evils of his day, his defence of the fallen cause, and the tragic account of his personal life. The critic's sympathy with Milton's politics and the Puritan cause in general is obvious throughout; at the risk of carrying his own methods too far it may be conjectured that this influenced his interpretation of Samson Agonistes as an impassioned diary.

Although Verity by no means goes as far as Percival in finding hidden allusions in Samson, he does call the drama a record of Milton's "deepest feelings at the most tragic point of his career."⁶⁵ He states that Milton found little opportunity in Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained for "disburthening his resentment" against the nation for recalling the Stuarts and slipping back into the "old bondage...." But in Samson he found a perfect opportunity to speak his mind as the "saeva indignatio of his soul found vent and made the verse..." As Masson and Percival, Verity thinks that Milton selected the story of Samson because of the correspondence to

his own situation. The parallels he points out between Milton and the Hebrew champion are broad and general. He notes the blindness, the unhappy marriage, the closing years of isolation and disappointment. In religion he notes that both Milton and Samson had fought for the cause of God as they conceived it, only to see it overwhelmed by Dagon on the one hand and episcopacy on the other. In politics, Samson's mission was to deliver Israel from the enemy, while Milton's "self-appointed office" was to help save England from the chains of absolute monarchy.

Both Samson and Milton failed in their undertakings, and here, Verity says, the parallel must end. The reasons for their failures were completely different. Samson was overthrown by his own weakness and folly, the Puritan poet through the errors of others. In this sense, he states that Samson represents the English nation, "who, like him, had profaned their mystery of Heaven-sent freedom, selling themselves into the slavery of kings and priests and politicians (worse Philistines than those of Gaza), and yielding to the fascination of the Dalila of the Restoration." (Verity points out that this indictment of England under the Restoration represents only Milton's view.) He concludes his biographical interpretation by noting that Samson's remorse was meant by Milton to be the feeling of the people when they should reflect on the evil effects of the Restoration. Milton, he states, never doubted that the day of repentance would come. "So here, as in all his other controversies, the right (he thought) lay with him, the wrong with his enemies."⁶⁶

Frederick Pollock took Seeley's position regarding the development of Milton's personality and poetic genius in considering him to be by taste and inclination a man of the Renaissance but with a strong Puritan strain gradually shaping his thoughts as he grew older.⁶⁷ Milton was discontented with the "outworn medieval routine" still attached to the universities when he was at Cambridge, but he was deeply attached to the rewards of classical scholarship and the fruits of the liberal arts he found in Italy. Yet in spite of his love of beauty and art, the Puritan element which dominates Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes was present in the youthful scholar who produced Comus. Pollock maintains that "by the natural development of temperament with advancing age, and more under the stress of outward circumstances" the Puritan side of Milton's nature came to dominate his later life.

In the early poetry written before the Italian journey he finds the "purely Renaissance type not ungracefully tempered by the Puritan's principle." But in the last three poems he wrote, Milton is wholly a Puritan poet, using the classical epic and drama forms to suit the needs of his Puritan matter. The critic agrees with Seeley and Garnett that if Milton had not been the Latin Secretary of Cromwell's government "we should certainly have something different from Paradise Lost; it is far from certain that it would have been better or so much Milton's own." Pollock also stresses Milton's artistic difficulties. As a Puritan he was to a large extent cut off from the great traditions of Catholic art. On the other hand, as an "English gentleman and scholar of the

Christian Renaissance," he was not completely free to use the Puritan version of the "old Hebrew ideal." As a result, Pollock asserts that Milton had to adopt a sort of "compromising mythology...." His theological subject in Paradise Lost also weakened the dramatic effect:

It is only by forgetting the omnipotence that one can follow with any interest the actions of an omnipotent ruler who is always limiting the exercise of his power for apparently capricious reasons, and to the advantage of no one but the poet, who thereby acquires a story to tell.⁶⁸

Satan, he says, having human passions and "finite though super-human powers," provides the real interest in Paradise Lost. In spite of these objections which Pollock points out, all of them due to the conflict between the Renaissance and Puritan sides of the poet's character, he concludes that Milton triumphed over all obstacles and produced an "unsurpassed and unapproached" poem.

Francis Thompson had little sympathy for Milton as a man, but he greatly respected his genius as a poet.⁶⁹ On reading Thompson's brief article in The Academy (1897), one is quickly reminded of Johnson's harsh portrait of the stern republican dominating his household with an iron hand:

He was stern, he was austere, he was self-centered; his impeccable strength was purchased by a sublime and monotonous egoism -- which is the name they give to selfishness in poets. Very chill must have been the life of his girls in that Puritan house, reading to the inwrapped Puritan father from languages they did not understand, and taking down from his lips poetry they understood still less.⁷⁰

This conception of the man does affect Thompson's interpretation of the poetry, though it certainly does not detract from his opinion of Milton's genius, "for sheer accomplishment not

equalled in our language." Like other critics he cites the "luxuriant beauty" of the early poetry but he notes that it is without "humaneness or heart-blood..." Milton's extreme austerity and his lack of sympathy with other people are prevalent even in his first works. But in the later poems Thompson is most impressed by the "severe magnificence" which derived directly from the stern character of the poet. Milton was great, but his was a cold grandeur -- "of overawing sublimity, yet not ethereal...a poet to whom all must bow the knee, few or none the heart...." Thompson states that Milton would have superseded Shakespeare "if his grandeurs, his splendours, his august solemnities, had been humid with a tear or smile."

Walter Raleigh's biography (1900) might more properly be called a "poetic-biographical" study since he indiscriminately uses both of these elements in his critical interpretation of Milton.⁷⁰ Raleigh's unique method can best be understood by his statement that Milton was the most egotistical and subjective of poets. He finds the man present in all of the poems, uttering forcefully and consistently his most personal thoughts and feelings. Thus he uses his conception of Milton's character and the facts of his life to interpret the poetry, while bringing the poetry, as well as the prose, to explain the man.

In his account of Milton's character, Raleigh tries to avoid some of the extreme positions taken by his predecessors. He emphasizes the poet's serious disposition, his lack of humor, and his isolation from his contemporaries, but he does

not make Milton an extremely disagreeable Puritan as Matthew Arnold did. He is obviously glad to give praise whenever he can; his sincere respect is seen in his description of the poet's great strength of mind, heart, and will, though he points out that Milton's "lonely greatness" has "endeared him to none." He asserts that Milton possessed an "unrelenting intensity" and burning passion which made him solemnly dedicate himself to the highest aims in all his activities, whether in literature, politics, or religion. But this same loftiness made him a poor "boon-companion" as the sonnet to Henry Lawrence clearly shows. Raleigh does not dwell on Milton's Puritanism as the cause of unpleasant personal traits. His Puritan temperament consisted of a "severe and self-centered idea of life and character," not a set of rules to be dogmatically impressed upon others. The poet ardently believed in the inspiration and grace given by God to rare and worthy men. Milton's Puritanism permitted him to combine his Biblical and classical studies, to relate pagan and Christian interests. Raleigh postulates no conflict between Milton's Renaissance and Puritan inclinations. The elevation of mind which led him to reject common ambitions and passions, and at the same time limited his sympathy with other men, was directly responsible for the lofty dignity of his poetic style. Raleigh asserts that only a strength of mind such as Milton's could have produced such heightened expression. Yet in spite of his great qualities of mind and his wide interests, he insists on the "rare simplicity" of the poet's character.⁷¹

"There is but one Milton, and he is throughout one and the

same, in his life, in his prose, and in his verse...." This belief is the reason and justification of Raleigh's biographical method and literary criticism.

He treats L'Allegro and Il Penseroso as charming portraits of Milton's youth when the influence of the Elizabethan "native grace" still marked his mind and his poetry. The speakers in both poems embody separately the cheerful and pensive components of Milton's nature. Yet even at this early point, "his choice is made." The young poet looks on the merry scenes in L'Allegro with disinterested detachment; already he was turning to serious thoughts and problems as the concluding lines of Il Penseroso reveal. Raleigh states that it was impossible for Milton to have been indifferent to politics; the "rising tide of political passion submerged the solemn Arcadia of his early fancies."⁷³ He carefully points out the importance of the Commonwealth Period to the development of the poet as he disagrees with those critics who would regard it as merely an interlude between two poetic periods. "It was not so; political passion dominates and informs all his later poems, dictating even their subjects." After writing the companion poems, the serious disposition, augmented by his interest in contemporary events, dominated all his poetry. No cheerful note, after that faint one sounded in L'Allegro, entered his writings. Comus is interpreted as a solemn demonstration of chastity triumphant over sensual pleasure. Milton regarded human life as a series of temptations; the purity and strength of the Lady represent the youthful poet's own philosophy. The passionate outburst against the corrupt clergy in Lycidas

points up his growing concern with public affairs after he had voluntarily turned his back on fantasy and imaginative delights.

As the most subjective of poets, Milton's voice can be heard in the speeches of all his major characters. Whether it be Satan, Adam, Samson, the Archangels, or Christ, the voice is unmistakably Milton's. Paradise Lost is a record of the poet's dreams and aspirations, yet the lesson Milton learned from the failure of his dreams is directly expressed in the quiet ending of the epic. Raleigh maintains that Michael's precepts express Milton's personal feelings with the most intensity. "For consolation he fell back on the patience of the resolved mind."⁷⁴ However, Satan is the true hero of the poem since Milton unintentionally gave most of his sympathy to the fallen angel. All of the characters in Paradise Lost bear the "generic stamp." Adam and Eve stand for the archtypes of the human race; their incomparable grandeur springs from the fact that Milton "knew human nature only in the gross." Raleigh sees Milton's hand in every part of Paradise Lost, as Coleridge had seen Milton "in every line" of the epic. He points out that the natural form of an epic provides a "cathedral for the ideas of a nation," but Milton made Paradise Lost a "chapel-of-ease for his own mind," a great monument to his own genius and habits of thought.⁷⁵

The reason that Milton preferred Paradise Regained to Paradise Lost is that the later poem, like Samson Agonistes, contained more of his personal feelings and beliefs:

The epic machinery flags in the later books (of Paradise Lost), and he was doubtless glad to turn to themes which put less of a strain upon him, and let him speak more of himself and his own meditations. The vibration that comes into his voice when he speaks, in Paradise Lost, of himself, of his blindness, of his poetic inspiration and ambition, is heard throughout these last poems.⁷⁶

The severity of style in the two last poems was due to the gradual change in Milton's mind as he became more and more mentally isolated. Raleigh points out the great loneliness in the last poems, noting Milton's calm and dignified old age. "No young man could have written a sentence of them." The solemnity and strength of the poems mark his defiant retreat before his enemies of the Restoration. The poet chose his ground and took his stand quietly without hope or fear.

Leslie Stephen reviewed Raleigh's Milton for the Quarterly Review in 1901, and in so doing he stressed the importance of the alliance of biography with criticism.⁷⁷ Though pointing out that "a poem must stand on its own basis," Stephen asserts that the "biography enables us to divine better the secret of the charm already felt." Johnson's Life marked the increasing importance of biographical material in the criticism of Milton's poetry, but he still kept them apart. Stephen notes that Comus would be exquisite if it were anonymous, but knowing the facts of Milton's life and understanding to some extent his personality heightens the reader's appreciation of the elder brother "when his voice becomes that of the young poet taking up his function as the laureate of virtue." There is a marked difference in Stephen's position

and that of critics like Emerson who relegated the poetry to a secondary position in order to find the man behind it. The Victorian critic's view corresponds more closely with that of the historical scholar of today who uses the biography as supplementary material to increase understanding and heighten appreciation of the poetry, but with emphasis always kept on the work of art. This is Stephen's method; his criticism perhaps more than that of any other critic of the age shows the extent to which biography had found its place as an indispensable tool of the literary critic.

The thesis of Stephen's essay is that Milton's poetry is to rest on its own merits as poetry as far as it is possible for the critic to keep personal prejudices out of his judgments. The biography is to be used as needed to clarify, enforce, or augment understanding, but in no sense is the man to stand in the way of the poetry. He uses this method in his criticism of Lycidas. Stephens cannot agree with Raleigh that the elegy should be considered "as the effusion of real passion," but agrees with Johnson that Lycidas does not convince the reader that Milton actually lost appetite when King was drowned. Rather, he thinks that Milton was "thinking as much of himself as of his dead companion," and in the figure of Lycidas he incorporated his personified views of "the Cambridge culture struggling against the dry scholastic stupidity of the college authorities." In this sense, the elegy conveys genuine emotion. In the poem he outlined his future stand as the champion of intellectual freedom, the intrepid enemy of "spiritual slavery" in literature and theology as

represented by Chappell and Laud. Thus Stephen uses biographical material to point out the emotional intensity of the poem condemned by Johnson as incapable of conveying genuine feeling.

Stephen conceives of Milton as all of one piece, noting that the poet's moods changed under hard experiences but that the man remained essentially the same throughout his life. He says that "to exhibit the man fully is also to characterise his work." Like Raleigh, he agrees that the poet was never lost in the prose writer, adding further that if Milton had not participated in the political controversies of his day, he would never have produced Paradise Lost as we have it. To take Milton out of politics would have resulted, perhaps, in a brilliant stylist, but the essential greatness would have been lost. Although the poet's irascibility "perverts his reasoning" Stephen maintains that it did not degrade his personal character. The ordeal of the middle years bore fruit in Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes, and the value of the prose works, according to Stephen, is that they enable the reader to understand more clearly "the sources of the unapproachable majesty" in the later poems. "The heroic attitude of his last days shows the essentially noble elements of the old passion (i.e., Milton's great passion for liberty) and is in turn made intelligible by the previous emotions."⁷⁸ The personal element is present in all of Milton's writings, and while this disfigured his prose works since he wrote always from his personal point of view, it shaped the great character of the poet who was to produce immortal poetry in his old age.

Stephen does not believe that Milton was a great thinker; in politics and theology he was a thorough partisan unable to place himself in any position unsympathetic to his own.

"Milton remained an uncompromising and unhesitating dogmatist."

This led him to base Paradise Lost on that theological creed which became unacceptable to later readers; "he is convinced that there are no mysteries in the government of the universe which cannot be solved by our dialectical skill." Milton's dogmatism, according to Stephen, is responsible for his conception of God in Paradise Lost as well as the "solid materialism" which permeates the poetry. Indeed, Stephen finds every aspect of Milton's theology offensive; he flatly denies that it can be approached as a religious poem at all. To fully appreciate the epic, a "suspension of belief" must be brought by the sympathetic reader as is done in cases of pagan poems like the Iliad.

The familiar concept of Milton as a haughty egoist is accepted by Stephen and applied to his interpretation of Satan. In Paradise Lost, Satan's pride shows a definite affinity to the "honest haughtiness and self-esteem" which Milton attributed to himself. Thus Satan's error is attributed to the head rather than to the heart. Milton miscalculated the position of the fallen angel and gave a noble quality to a mistaken end. Stephen states that Milton had more real sympathy with the Stoic than with Christian ethics, an assertion based on Milton's fascination with "Greek and Roman exploits" and the character of Satan which resulted from this interest.

Beyond seeing aspects of Milton in Satan, Stephen goes on to say that the more we read Paradise Lost the more "we see the hand of the author." He quotes Raleigh's statement that Paradise Lost became a "chapel-of-ease" for Milton's own mind, "a monument to his own genius and to his own habits of thought." As the tombs of the Medici suggest only Michael Angelo, Milton's epic suggests only the poet. If it must be called a religious poem, the statement must be qualified by saying that it represents Milton's religion, "one product of the very genuine convictions of the day which had varying outcomes in the faiths of Cromwell and Baxter and George Fox, and again in that of the more narrow and bigoted Puritans." The grandeur of Satan makes him the hero of the poem, and it is obvious that this grandeur results from the same quality of Milton's character. "His poetry is like the 'spectre of the Brocken' -- a gigantic shape which is really a reflection of himself." All of the characters in Paradise Lost are "super-human productions" with "vagueness and dim visions of remote perspectives" taking the place of real mysticism. Though the figures are shadowy, Stephen states that there is always a firm outline in the background. This results from Milton's weakness in metaphysics, and "his undoubting acceptance of rigid dogmas, naturally goes with the conviction that he is dealing with history and fact...." The result is that Milton's poetry never evaporates "in the thin air of philosophical concepts...." Thus an admirable quality in the poetry resulted from a weakness of Milton's intellect.

Stephen examines the blank verse style of Paradise Lost,

accepting in part at least Arnold's idea of the grand style.

Milton is a master of the 'grand style' because the exquisite ear was also at the service of a character of unique dignity, moved by intense convictions, contemptuous of all that was mean and trivial; hard, dogmatic and unsympathetic, but constantly under the stress of intense and massive emotion, which finds its natural clothing in his unequalled diction.⁷⁹

Stephen's method differs from Arnold's, for he deals with the entire character of the man rather than a limited literary character divorced from the unpleasant personal traits which both critics, but especially Arnold, found offensive. The dogmatism and the unsympathetic attitude towards others contributed to the poetry as well as the nobility and dignity of the man's character. To understand the "gigantic figure" of the man through the biography clearly elucidates the perceptive reader's appreciation of both the style and the content of the poetry.

In an article in Nineteenth Century and After (1909), Herbert Paul attempted to refute the Massonic portrait of Milton as a Puritan by emphasizing the Renaissance side of the poet's personality.⁸⁰ This anti-Masson view was to be increasingly voiced by twentieth century critics. Paul does not entirely eliminate the Puritan elements from Milton's character; he retains what he considers to be the best qualities: stern faith and endurance coupled with religious humility. But he asserts that Milton was in no sense a Puritan in the sense that Bunyan was -- one who excluded the classical spirit of Greece and Rome entirely from his interests. Milton possessed the religious fervour of the Puritan sect, but he also retained throughout his life the spirit of Renaissance

learning, the love of physical beauty, the comprehension of the great tradition of the humanities. His Puritanism led him to dedicate himself to religious subjects, but he brought to his poetry all the "literary grace and charm" of the Elizabethan age.

It was his privilege to realize and to exhibit the truth that devotion to the highest objects may be blended with appreciation of the loveliest fancies, and that poetry solves the problem of identifying appearances with reality...Nature designed him to show in his own person the union of apparent opposites, the submergence of ferocity in sublimity, and of ardor in grace.⁸¹

Paul states that Milton cannot be identified with the "rank and file of Puritan partisans," and he regrets that criticism which has blamed him for something he was not. He stands forth "as the supreme instance of poetic beauty united with majestic strength."

He disagrees with critics (like Masson and Taine) who would interpret the poetry by explicit biographical material. He says that the critics of Milton's poetry must discard the circumstances of time and place, Roundheads and Cavaliers, and "lose [themselves] in contemplation of the humble piety and the profound learning which glowed together in the fusion of Paradise Lost." He notes that the discussions in the epic have been compared with the debates in the Long Parliament, but Milton, in loftiness and stateliness above any human model, was parliamentary only in form. "Milton, in short, cannot be likened to any example drawn from his circumstances or his career." The use of explicit details from the poet's life to illustrate or explain passages in the poetry Paul

dismisses as "cheap and easy" formulas, parallels which can never account for Milton's great genius. Such methods are as "barren as the trick of calling him a typical Puritan."

They leave out of sight all the distinctive attributes of his extraordinary genius, such as its aloofness, its magnificence, its peculiar interpretation of familiar things, its audacious ascent beyond the barriers of time and space in order to scale the ramparts of the unearthly Paradise. Examine Milton as we will, the essence escapes, not indeed the perception, but the analysis of the critic, because it consists of those ultimate particles or atoms which cannot be analyzed any further.⁸²

Paul's criticism is significant not only for his rejection of the idea of Milton as essentially a Puritan, but also for his opposition to the use of biography, beyond the formation of a literary character, in the literary criticism. This is the more remarkable when his extreme sympathy with Milton's life and character are considered.

The Spectator observed the three hundredth anniversary of Milton's birth with a critical interpretation of his character and poetry which agrees with Seeley and Pollock's view of a dual nature comprised of Renaissance and Puritan elements.⁸³ The anonymous writer gives the poet what he considers the essential strength and weakness of Puritanism -- "its grandeur and its narrowness, its noble sincerity and its coldness of heart." The rigidity of Milton's moral nature was reinforced by his great egotism based on pride. But it would be a mistake, he says, "to suppose that Milton was a Puritan and nothing more." He was a "child of the Renaissance" too as the love of Spenser obvious in his early works attests. Milton

not only loved beauty, but he was obsessed by it.

He was an artist to his finger-tips, -- exquisitely refined, marvellously imaginative, infinitely sensitive to all the varied loveliness of material things. The interest of his character lies in this -- that he mingled the sensuousness of a virtuoso with the austerity of a seer.⁸⁴

Thus making Milton an artistic Puritan (a concept incongruous to some Victorian critics but hardly surprising to modern students of the Puritan temper), the writer asserts that each side of the dual personality aided the other. The moral rigidity kept his artistic talents "from losing themselves in their own sweetness while they on their side endowed the most exalted of his conceptions with colour, warmth, and form."

In a comparison of Dante and Milton in The Quarterly Review (1909), Alfred Austin was most interested in the attitudes towards women displayed by the two poets.⁸⁵ Milton, he says, had no Beatrice, no spiritual love for a woman, and this lack is reflected in his poetry. Eve's address to Adam in Paradise Lost:

My author and disposer, what thou bidst
Unargued I obey, so God ordains.
God is thy law, thou mine...

indicates to Austin that Milton's attitude towards women was unlike any other poet's; the Puritan poet believed in absolute masculine domination. To support this theory he offers Milton's choice of an epic subject of which the dominating incident is given by the words, "She gave me of the tree and I did eat." Austin brings forward Dalila to illustrate Milton's opinion of women, a character he considers even more

convincing than Eve. He suggests that the true theme of Samson Agonistes is the poet's belief in the frailty and inferiority of women. Samson's remorse for revealing his secret, his harsh insults, and the famous line beginning "Out, out, hyaena!" clearly show Milton's attitude.

Perhaps anticipating an objection to his conclusions, Austin adds that it cannot be said that Milton, like Shakespeare, speaks only dramatically in Samson since the chorus in the drama is of the same opinion as the hero. The chorus declares that the man is favored of heaven who discovers "one virtuous woman...." Milton speaks through the chorus to give his most personal feelings and beliefs. These conclusions are actually harsher than Johnson's curt statement that Milton had a "Turkish contempt for females." As if realizing the import of his statement, Austin adds that Milton had so many noble qualities "that he can well afford to have the truth told concerning him." From this point he continues his analysis of Milton's character from passages in the poems. A consideration of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso bring the question, "Where is the stern Puritan Milton in these cheerful, generous verses?" He then postulates the now familiar idea that a gradual change came over Milton's happy temperament and left him a grave, stern man. The change was partly due to his marriage to Mary Powell and partly to his own severe theory of woman's rightful position. Also contributing to the severe austerity reflected in the later poems were the scandalous Restoration Period and the lost Puritan cause:

The natural austerity of his character and principles deepened with his new situation and changed outlook. He had fallen, as he thought, on evil days and evil tongues; and, scandalised by the sensual levity of the King's court and favorites, he pondered with almost exultant and vindictive retrospect on Adam and Eve's first disobedience and its fruits, and devoted his severe genius and magnificent diction to justifying the ways of God to man.⁸⁶

Some of Austin's conclusions deserve special notice if only to point out the lengths to which biographical criticism can be carried into unsupported hypothesis. Certainly his statement that Milton's principal motive in writing Samson was the desire to vent his spleen against women is unjustified. Even those critics most antagonistic to the Puritan poet have not offered such an idea. The notion of Milton's gloating vindictively over the Fall of Man to console himself for the lost cause is not only unwarranted but inconsistent with Austin's own interpretation of the poet's character as nobly dedicated to the highest pursuits.

The established New England attitude towards Milton appears in George A. Gordon's panegyric essay in the Atlantic Monthly (1909).⁸⁷ Though inaccurate on some points, as when he says that Milton was "contemptuously disregarded" for a century after his death, Gordon presents a sincere tribute on the poet's tercentenary. The tone of the essay can be deduced from such statements as this:

John Milton has at length come to his kingdom, and of that kingdom there shall be no end. Again it is now seen that one anointed of the Most High has lived and spoken and sung among his people.⁸⁸

And this, referring to Milton's posthumous fame:

There is nothing quite so great in human history as the spectacle of transcendent genius and goodness spending themselves in the purest and most essential service...⁸⁹

Successively, Gordon exalts Milton as a "supreme artist," a great religious prophet, a master of educational theory, and a champion of social, political, and religious freedom. He praises Macaulay for recognizing Milton's grandeur and bluntly attacks Johnson for his "veiled enmity" to the Puritan poet. Though much of the essay deals with Milton as the apostle of freedom, some attention is given the poetry:

In Milton we meet, as in no other poet in our tongue, the stately march of vast powers, the noble vision of the ideal side of existence, rapt regard for moral and eternal issues, prophetic insight and prophetic fire...⁹⁰

Gordon is disturbed by those critics who, finding the theology in Paradise Lost incompatible with their own beliefs, condemned the poem for that reason. He describes the poem as a "poetic symbol of eternal truth," postulating a "Miltonic mythology" which would give the epic universal significance and thus refute the charge that Paradise Lost could only be appreciated in Milton's day. He interprets the fall as the "symbol of the universal infidelity of man to his highest ideals," adding that if they are spiritually understood, readers should have no difficulty with any of Milton's ideas.

More specifically, however, he interprets Paradise Lost as a political and personal allegory somewhat in the manner of Taine, but with reverent panegyric substituted for that critic's flippant and sarcastic tone. He states that the "vitality of Paradise Lost comes from the soul of Milton the

English patriot." The poem represents the "generalized form" of the poet's own history. He develops this idea by tracing the causes of the Civil Wars, the rise and fall of Cromwell, and the Restoration and applying them to the main actions in the epic. He concludes:

In the consciousness of a tremendous personal and national calamity, he faced the spiritual tragedy of mankind as told in the epic of the Fall. Personal contradiction and sorrow, national disaster and woe, were taken up into the universal tragedy and misery of the race. Paradise Lost is the epic of the race, but the racial epic is fed from the tragic issues of personal and national history. The great poem burns from its first line to its last with this tremendous contemporaneous fire.⁹¹

Thus the opening lines of the epic show Milton's great disappointment at the "nation's fall," while the concluding lines express the "sorrow of a nation of fallen freemen...." Gordon implies that such an interpretation must inevitably follow from the realization that Milton was an extremely subjective artist; he could not escape from his own individuality. The poet always begins with himself and moves from the personal element to issues involving his nation and the entire human race. As Tennyson was supposed to have done in In Memoriam, Milton universalized his individual experience, though the experience continued to be his.

All of the poems are briefly regarded for the biographical content. L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Comus show the purity, enthusiasm, and optimism of the young poet, while his "first great sorrow" finds voice in Lycidas. The sonnets show us the poet as "the representative of suffering freedom and heroism...." Samson Agonistes is the "final surge" in

this "mighty representative life." Here, too, as in Paradise Lost, a national and racial tragedy is embodied in the "defeat and victory of his own soul." Gordon finds Paradise Regained "bloodless" because there is very little of Milton's personality in it. This is the basis of his critical evaluation, for Milton's character is even greater than his poetry. He was "one of the kings of the race" whose character as a man transcends the achievement of his poetic genius.

In the same year, J. E. G. de Montmorency attempted to appraise Milton's position as a man and as a poet in the twentieth century by comparing him with Shelley.⁹² From the standpoint of poetic genius he finds them very similar, but as men he notes a vast difference. Milton had great character; Shelley did not. Both were "spirits of revolt" with the difference that the Romantic rebel was a Socialist while Milton was a Puritan. Montmorency adds that "each wrote more than he realized of the spirit of his inner life when he wrote of Prometheus or of Adam."⁹³

This statement sets the tone for Montmorency's interpretation of Paradise Lost; he views the epic as the "history of the loss of liberty." When Milton wrote the epic he had lost his illusions of a free commonwealth; the "puritanic fires" were dampened by the death of Cromwell and the Restoration which was to follow. The critic emphasizes the fact that Milton's bitter disillusionment eventually turned to serenity and peace as he envisioned liberty as "the way of reasonableness, the way of education, the way of love." In his blind old age he who had been blind to the facts of human nature saw

truth at last. Thus he turned again to poetry with character deepened and strengthened by the long years of controversy and produced this immortal epic.

Montmorency follows Masson and Bagehot in interpreting Milton as an austere Puritan, but he echoes Emerson when he states that the poetry, great as it is, is secondary to the man. He exalts the poet as the "apostle of Liberty," adding that "the pure idea of true liberty" is never absent from his poetry. It is in this sense that the critic sets forth Milton as having much to say to "modern men." Paradise Lost and the prose works show their modern readers that "inner liberty" ultimately rests with the individual. Milton, more than any other writer, can show us by his works and the example of his own life how we should live.⁹⁴

SUMMARY

In the period which followed the publication of Masson's first volume, the biographical method of literary criticism as applied to Milton's poetry came fully into its own. It has been seen that this was the increasing tendency in the first half of the century, but in the fifty years comprising this period every major critic of Milton's poetry and many minor writers used the biographical method. The periodic stimulation of interest resulting from the successive appearances of Masson's volumes accounts in part for this fact, but we have seen that the method itself was used much earlier, until in the latter part of the century it became the most widely used method of studying Milton's poetry.

There is a noticeable agreement among critics concerning those aspects of Milton's life and character which were to be used in the interpretation of his poetry. Milton's Puritanism was the focal point of most considerations of the man and his works. Although New England writers and some British critics stressed Milton's Puritan side in the preceding period, Masson's influence undoubtedly did most to popularize the portrait of Milton as a Puritan. But the term Puritan itself varied in meaning among individual writers. To some it meant a noble but austere Milton ruled by high moral principles and religious fervor. Such critics as Farrar, Lowell, Dowden, Gordon, Pattison, and Montmorency approached the poetry through this view of the man. That

the earlier type of hero-worship and panegyric was still active appears in the criticism of Swinburne, Gordon, New, and Farrar. Many of these critics attempted to relate Milton to his age and to determine the aspects of his political career which most affected his poetry. In the criticism of the Quarterly Review and of Temple Bar the old Tory bias against the poet's political career is still evident.

On the other hand, some critics found little or nothing to commend in Milton's Puritanism; a few revived the old Puritan stereotype to some extent in depicting Milton as a rigidly narrow dogmatist, a grim, forbidding individual completely ruled by his theology. Such derogatory implications against the man naturally carried over into the literary criticism. Consequently, the poetry was judged unsatisfactory on many points by such writers as Taine, Scherer, the Temple Bar writer, Arnold, Seeley, and Pollock. These critics believed that Milton's Puritanism and certain aspects of his personal character definitely limited his poetic development. This was in spite of their uniform praise for his great artistry. A tendency to separate the subject matter of the poetry from the poetic style, noticed earlier, in Landor's criticism, appears in the criticism of Arnold, Scherer, and others.

A variation of the approach to Milton as a "true Puritan" was employed by critics who stressed the Renaissance elements

in his early life and writings. Taine, Scherer, Seeley, and Pollock traced the changes in the poet's character through a comparison of his early and later works. A conflict in Milton's mind between Puritan and Renaissance elements was seen reflected in Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes. These critics regarded the Puritan side as gradually dominating his personality and stifling the Renaissance elements. In some cases this view resulted in very unfavorable criticism of Paradise Lost.

In this period, however, a reaction against the usual practice of stressing Milton's Puritan character appeared in the criticism of Saintsbury, Raleigh, and Paul. The difference is one of emphasis rather than direction. Although Saintsbury and Raleigh played down the Puritan side, they did not deny it. Practically all of Milton's poems were interpreted by biographical material with great stress placed upon the importance of the middle years of his career to his later poetry. Stephen and New asserted that the ordeals of the controversial period were essential to the production of Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes. The biographical interpretation of Samson Agonistes became the established critical view in this period, though the extent to which critics went in finding parallels and allusions to the poet's life and times varied greatly among individual writers. Paradise Lost was consistently viewed in relation to the biography and the historical background. Here the inter-

pretations ranged and varied from Taine's personal and political allegory to Dowden's idea of a conflict between good and evil as the dominating idea in Milton's thought. Comus, Lycidas, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and the sonnets were also studied and evaluated in relation to the poet's life, character and historical age. Even the poetic style was studied from a biographical standpoint in this period.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that the identification of Milton with a particular religious sect, together with the religious nature of his later poems, influenced the interpretation and the judgment of his works for over two hundred years after his death. Eighteenth century writers stressed the religious and sublime elements in his poetry and from these sources grew the attitudes summed up in the epithets Sacred Bard and Sublime Poet. These terms covered the man and his works, and in some cases, at least, placed Milton above ordinary criticism. The generalized eighteenth century attitudes were carried over into the next century, especially in the more popular British and American periodicals. But we have also seen that a negative interest in Milton's Puritanism and its effects upon the artistic merits of his poetry marked the criticism of many later nineteenth century writers. As the century progressed, the Puritan side of the man and his poetry was condemned or treated disparagingly by leading critics. The earlier notices of Milton's religion were worded in neutral language or in terms of high praise. Following Masson's first volume, however, critics increasingly found the Puritan side of his character harmful to his later poems. On the whole, it must be concluded that Milton's religion motivated two principal approaches to his poetry. The first, represented by eighteenth century writers, American and British periodicals, and some later writers, often bordered on hero-worship of the man and seldom fell below the highest praise of his works. The second, which found the Puritan theology unsatisfactory and

regarded the poet as an austere or forbidding individual, discovered in the poetry concomitant defects. Both approaches seem to have depended to a great extent upon the religious opinions of the individual writer and his age.

Milton's political views and his role as a controversial writer have been equally important in the approach, interpretation, and evaluation of his poetry. The eighteenth century idea of the Great Whig Milton as the champion of English liberties was carried on by the liberal periodicals and by important writers of the Romantic period. Hero-worship of the man naturally was extended to his poetry by liberal writers. While the liberals were eager to consider all sides of Milton's character, in some cases their admiration of the great patriot overshadowed their considerations of the poetry and relegated literary criticism to a secondary position. On the other hand, they were among the first to use biographical material in their critical interpretations. The great interest they showed in Milton's political activities also resulted in the attempt to explain the origins of his great poems. As in the case of Milton's religion, politics often gave rise to biased panegyric criticism.

While many conservative eighteenth century writers disliked Milton's politics, most of them made sharp distinctions between the man and the poet. The direct antithesis to the all-encompassing Whig approach was the Tory practice of excluding certain portions of Milton's life and character from any consideration of his poetry. The eighteenth century method of exemplifying his great and pious character from Paradise Lost was

turned to good use by conservative writers who also considered the early poems (as opposed to the prose works) as the best index to Milton's true personality. The differences between the two politically inspired critical methods were those of emphasis and inclusion. While Whig writers might employ aspects of the middle years to explain and to heighten their appreciation of the Grand Council in Pandemonium, Tories seldom went further than the Horton period or the poet's retirement in his old age for illustrative biographical material. Despite the occasional condemnations of Milton's poetry which resulted from political prejudice, Liberals and Conservatives alike generally gave it the highest praise, though for different reasons. In both cases, of course, the relationship between the man and his poetry was of prime importance, the attitude towards the one dictating the criticism of the other. As it developed throughout the nineteenth century, the biographical method became a very different tool in the hands of individual writers, who selected the material they brought to the poetry in accordance with their own opinions of Milton's politics, religion, or personal character. That much of this criticism, whether in the form of panegyric or defamation, was so biased by politics as to be inferior or worthless must be granted. The political element was never wholly eliminated in the period covered by this study, and it may be added that it still colors Milton criticism.

It is apparent from the criticism examined in this

thesis that the relation of the biography to the poetry has moved in two directions not always readily distinguishable in the hands of individual writers. The biographical method proper, as used by critics since Johnson's Life, has sought to interpret the poetry in the light of Milton's life and character and supplementary historical material. We have traced the development of this method and have seen that almost every aspect of Milton's life or character was used to explain or clarify his poetry. The frequent citation of Milton as the most subjective of English poets derives from the autobiographical passages in his works. But this view was extended far beyond those obvious instances in which Milton speaks directly to his reader. Critics increasingly interpreted the poetry in the light of the biography. That much of this interpretation was slanted to fit the critic's personal opinions and prejudices is obvious, but equally apparent is the fact that the slow decline of interest in the controversial side of Milton gave rise to a less biased approach and more honest criticism. But the mere fact that in our own day political and religious animosity can still rear their heads against the poet leads one to doubt that they can ever be wholly eliminated from criticism based on the biography.

On the other hand, the eighteenth century practice of illustrating the poet's life and character directly from his poetry has been used continuously to this day. This approach, which begins with the poetry and seeks to find the

man behind it, has sometimes been referred to as the "biographical fallacy." However, only a few writers have considered it fallacious to see Milton in his poetry to some extent. But in many cases a pre-conceived and often biased attitude found ample opportunity for justification through this practice. It certainly accounts in large measure for the widely varied views of Milton as a man which writers have drawn from his works. Portraits ranging from Abdiels to Satans, from grim Puritans to cultured Renaissance gentlemen have been offered as the true picture of Milton.

In spite of the prejudice which has abused the biographical method and in spite of the personal views which perhaps can never be wholly excluded, we must conclude that the man and the poetry are inextricably related. On the strength of those critics who have honestly attempted to understand the man and to view the poetry in the light of this understanding, we must conclude that the biographical method, when properly used, represents the best means of accomplishing these aims. After considering the criticism of Milton's poetry from Johnson's Life to the poet's Tercentenary we may assert that critics have increasingly realized this fact. Perhaps in the case of no other writer has the biography figured so importantly in the critical approach and interpretation of the poetry.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

1. William Riley Parker, Milton's Contemporary Reputation (Columbus, 1940), p. 55.
2. Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1922), p. 71. Havens states:
It is hardly an exaggeration to say that from Pope's day to Wordsworth's Milton occupied a place, not only in English literature, but in the thought and life of Englishmen of all classes, which no poet has held since and none is likely to hold again.
3. John Walter Good, Studies in the Milton Tradition (Urbana, 1915), p. 240.
4. Havens attributes the great popularity of Paradise Lost as a religious poem to the great stress placed upon theology, adding that to most of the orthodox the Puritan justification was entirely satisfactory. See The Influence of Milton, p. 33.
5. Good does note a few minor controversies regarding Milton's supposed conversion to Catholicism and his Arian views, but they appear relatively unimportant.
6. James Ernest Thorpe in his doctoral dissertation, The Decline of the Miltonic Tradition, (Harvard, 1940), especially derides this result. See also Good, p. 159.
7. Havens, op. cit., p. 39.
8. Good, op. cit., p. 120.
9. Ibid., p. 123.
10. Ibid., p. 124.
11. Ibid., p. 127.
12. Ibid., p. 128.
13. Frank Willis Plunkett, The Milton Tradition in One of Its Phases (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Indiana, 1932), pp. 34-35.
14. Good devotes three pages to the Bentley controversy. Certainly the relentless attacks of The Grub Street Journal on that scholar for his unfortunate emendations of Paradise Lost stemmed as much from animosity towards Bentley as the desire to defend Milton. See Good, pp. 176-179.

Good also summarizes completely the Lauder case, tracing it from that unscrupulous writer's first accusation of plagiarism to his own exposition as a forger. For a complete account see Good, pp. 192-197.

15. Raymond Dexter Havens, "Seventeenth Century Notices of Milton" and "The Early Reputation of Paradise Lost," Englische Studien, XL (1909), 175-199. Most of this material was incorporated into the first chapter of The Influence of Milton, cited above.
16. See: The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Taste in Poetry (1701) and The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry (1704) in The Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, (Baltimore, 1939), I.
17. See: Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England (New York, 1935), pp. 45-54.
18. See: Joseph Addison, Criticisms on Paradise Lost, ed. Albert S. Cook, (Boston, 1892). Most of Addison's criticism was devoted to justifying Milton's epic by the conventional rules; however, his personal views centered around the religious subject and the sublimity of Milton's thought.
19. Ibid., p. 27.
20. Edward Dowden, "Milton in the Eighteenth Century," in Proceedings of the British Academy, III (1907-1908), 28.
21. Good, op. cit., p. 150.
22. Joseph Warton, An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope (London, 1806), I, 115.
23. Edward Young, Conjectures on Original Composition in a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison (London, 1759), p. 9.
24. Ibid., p. 77.
25. Monk's study of the sublime, cited above, carefully traces the progress of this aesthetic principle in the eighteenth century.
26. George F. Sensabaugh, That Grand Whig, Milton (Stanford, 1952), p. 189.
27. Good, op. cit., p. 175.
28. Havens, The Influence of Milton, p. 41.

29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Good, op. cit., p. 133.
32. Sensabaugh, op. cit., p. 195.
33. Ibid., p. 196.
34. Ibid., p. 197.
35. Ibid., p. 201.
36. John Robert Moore, "Milton Among the Augustans," SP XLVIII (1951), 16.
37. Ibid., p. 18.
38. See: George W. Whiting, "The Politics of Milton's Apostate Angels," N & Q CLXIII (1932), 384-386.
39. Ibid., p. 385.
40. Ibid., p. 386.
41. Johnson's criticism is considered in the next chapter. The scattered remarks of the other writers (all before 1779) are indexed in Good's Studies and in Havens's Influence.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter II

1. Samuel Johnson, Life of Milton (London, 1906).
2. Ibid., p. 4.
3. Contributors to the Gentleman's Magazine continued to discuss this issue as late as 1806.
4. Johnson, p. 13.
5. Ibid., p. 14.
6. Ibid., p. 30.
7. Ibid., p. 48.
8. Ibid., p. 13.
9. Ibid., p. 20.
10. Ibid., p. 48.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 47.
13. Ibid., p. 12.
14. Jean H. Hagstrum, Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism (Minneapolis, 1952), p. 39.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Johnson, p. 62.
18. Ibid., p. 64.
19. Perhaps most vehement was Anna Seward's statement: "He hated the man for his party, and his poetry for its pre-eminence... To be sure, when, in writing the life of that transcendent writer, he was obliged to review the Paradise Lost, he durst not, with all his effrontery, withhold a considerable portion of praise: - but he praises Milton under the eye of the public as Pistol eat his leek under that of Fluellen. After all he endeavours to do away, collectively, all his reluctant praise, of that glorious and beautiful poem by observing, that no person closes its pages with the desire of recurring to them...an impudent falsehood...." Quoted from a letter to Lady Eleanor Butler, December 9, 1795. In

Letters of Anna Seward, (Edinburgh, 1811), IV, 133.

20. John Walter Good, Studies in the Milton Tradition (Urbana, 1915), p. 212.
21. Johnson, p. 56.
22. Ibid., p. 71.
23. The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. (Oxford, 1825), III, 162.
24. Ibid., p. 168.
25. Johnson, Life of Milton, p. 74.
26. Good, p. 213.
27. Quoted from Raymond Dexter Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry, (Cambridge, 1922), p. 31.
28. In his "Milton in the Eighteenth Century," in Proceedings of the British Academy, III (London, 1907-1908), 275-294.
29. Good, p. 224.
30. Philip Neve, Cursory Remarks on the English Poets, (London, 1789), p. 141.
31. Ibid., p. 134.
32. William Hayley, The Life of Milton in Three Parts to which are added Conjectures On The Origin of Paradise Lost, (Dublin, 1797).
33. Ibid., p. 24.
34. Ibid., p. 137.
35. Charles Symmons, The Life of Milton, (London, 1810), p. 39.
36. Ibid., p. 587.
37. Ibid., p. 593.
38. Ibid., p. 631.
39. Ibid., p. 110.
40. Ibid., p. 532.
41. Ibid., p. 554.
42. Ibid., p. 499.
43. The Gentleman's Magazine, XLIX (1779), 362-363.

44. Ibid., p. 492.
45. The Gentleman's Magazine, LI (1781), 64-65.
46. The Gentleman's Magazine, LII (1782), 18-19.
47. Ibid., p. 19.
48. The Gentleman's Magazine, LVI, Part I (1786), 390.
49. The Gentleman's Magazine, LIX, Part I (1789), 413-417.
50. The Gentleman's Magazine, LXXXIII, Part I (1813), 326-327.
51. The British Critic, V (1795), 569-576.
52. Ibid., p. 573.
53. The British Critic, XXXV (1810), 467.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 117.
56. The British Critic, V, Ser. 2 (1816), 257-269.
57. Ibid., p. 258.
58. The British Critic, XII, Ser. 2 (1819), 156-172.
59. The British Critic, XVII, Ser. 2 (1822), 520-540.
60. Ibid., p. 536.
61. The British Critic, XII, Ser. 4 (1832), 43-64.
62. Ibid., p. 58.
63. The Quarterly Review, XXXII (1825), 228-230.
64. Ibid., p. 229.
65. Ibid., pp. 442-457.
66. The Quarterly Review, XXXVI (1827), 29-61.
67. Ibid., p. 30.
68. Ibid., p. 40.
69. Ibid., p. 46.
70. I have not had access to this first review, but the periodical itself recalls with obvious satisfaction its defence of Milton in the following year.

71. Three times in this period, however, The Monthly Review defended Johnson, twice his ability as a literary critic and once his strictures on Milton's educational theories. See volumes LIX, LXXVIII, and CXV.
72. The Monthly Review, CXII (1780), 479-483.
73. This supports Good's thesis that to English liberals Milton was the idolized exemplar of freedom.
74. The Monthly Review, XVI, Ser. 2 (1795), 121-125.
75. Ibid., p. 123.
76. The Monthly Review, LII, Ser. 2 (1807), 67-75.
77. Ibid., pp. 67-68.
78. The Monthly Review, LVIII, Ser. 2 (1809), 286-302.
79. The Monthly Review, XCIII, Ser. 2 (1820), 145.
80. The Monthly Review, XCV, Ser. 2 (1821), 4. The writer refers to The Second Defence of the English People.
81. The Monthly Review, XII, Ser. 3 (1829), 25-26.
82. The Monthly Review, CIII (1824), 378.
83. The Monthly Review, N.S. III, (1826), 258-273.
84. The Monthly Review, N.S. I, (1826), 308.
85. Ibid.
86. The Edinburgh Review, VIII (1806), 166-190.
87. Italics mine.
88. The Edinburgh Review, VII (1805-1806), 313-314.
89. The Edinburgh Review, XXV (1815), 490.
90. Ibid.
91. The Edinburgh Review, XXXI (1819), 478-479.
92. Ibid., p. 478. Quotation from Campbell.
93. The Edinburgh Review, XXXVIII (1823), 199-200.
94. The Edinburgh Review, XLII (1825), 55-58.
95. Ibid., pp. 304-346.

96. Ibid., p. 325.
97. Ibid., p. 314.
98. Ibid., p. 312.
99. Ibid., p. 346.
100. Ibid.
101. James Ernest Thorpe, The Decline of the Miltonic Tradition (Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, 1941), Chapter I.
102. John Aikin, "Epic Poetry," Letters to a Young Lady on a Course of English Poetry, (London, 1804), pp. 127-141.
103. Ibid., p. 139.
104. Ibid., pp. 140-141.
105. Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover, (London, 1902), VI, 42.
106. Ibid.
107. Hazlitt, I, 105-110.
108. Ibid., p. 109.
109. Ibid., p. 110.
110. Hazlitt, V, 46.
111. Ibid., p. 56.
112. Hazlitt, I, 37.
113. Hazlitt, V, 66.
114. Hazlitt, VIII, 233.
115. Hazlitt, I, 37.
116. Ibid., p. 106.
117. "Preface" to Prometheus Unbound, The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. H. Buxton Forman (London, 1901), III, 144-145.
118. Ibid.
119. A Defence of Poetry, The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. H. Buxton Forman, (London, 1880), III, 127-128.

120. Shelley, "On The Devil and Devils," Prose Works, VI, 389.
121. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Table Talk, ed. T. Ashe (London, 1909), p. 76.
122. The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge (London, 1836), I, 168.
123. Coleridge divides the period from the accession of Elizabeth to the Restoration at the year 1625.
124. Coleridge, Literary Remains, I, 169-170.
125. Ibid., p. 175.
126. Ibid., p. 170.
127. Coleridge, Table Talk, p. 250.
128. William Ellery Channing, Remarks on the Character and Writings of John Milton, (Boston, 1826).
129. Ibid., p. 9.
130. Ibid., p. 15.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter III

1. North American Review, XXV (1827), 74. This article gives an excellent summary of the high esteem which New Englanders felt towards the seventeenth century Puritans.
2. North American Review, XXXI (1830), 94-110.
3. Ibid., pp. 101-102.
4. Ibid., p. 103.
5. Ibid., p. 337.
6. Ibid., pp. 442-460.
7. American Quarterly Observer, II (1833), 194-195.
8. Ibid., I, 68-71.
9. Knickerbocker, III (1834), 120-134.
10. North American Review, XLI (1835), 379-380.
11. Ibid., p. 379.
12. North American Review, XLVII (1838), 56-73.
13. Ibid., p. 59.
14. Ibid., p. 64.
15. Ibid., p. 72.
16. North American Review, XLIX (1839), 317-348.
17. Ibid., p. 336.
18. North American Review, III(1840), 488-491.
19. United States Magazine and Democratic Review, XI (1842), 196-200.
20. American Review, II (1845), 49-50.
21. Ibid., p. 49.
22. American Review, III (1846), 250-258.
23. Knickerbocker, XXVII (1846), 4. A writer for the New Englander, VI (1848), 486, expressed the same idea in comparing Milton and Bonaparte.

24. United States Magazine and Democratic Review, XXVI (1850), 119-123.
25. Eclectic Magazine, XXII (1851), 335-336.
26. Ibid., p. 336.
27. Southern Quarterly Review, II (1850), 20.
28. North American Review, LXXIII (1851), 476.
29. North American Review, LXXXII (1856), 388-404.
30. North American Review, LXXXIII (1857), 315-316.
31. Ibid., p. 316.
32. New Englander, XVIII (1860), 1-3.
33. Ibid., p. 3.
34. De Bow's Review, XXVIII (1860), 5.
35. Ibid., p. 9.
36. Ibid., p. 416.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., p. 681.
39. Ibid., p. 667.
40. Ibid., p. 669.
41. Ibid., p. 670.
42. Ibid., p. 431.
43. Willis Duke Weatherford, ed., Analytical Index of De Bow's Review, 1952. (Privately printed).
44. In the year it ceased publication (1867), De Bow's Review gave vent to one last sarcastic article on Milton, ridiculing his views on women as the writer inferred them from Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes. Vol. III, Ser. 2, pp. 12-24.
45. The Mirror, XVI (1830), 15; 247.
46. Westminster Review, XIV (1831), 217.
47. William Howitt, The Book of the Seasons (London, 1831), 328. Quoted from the Westminster Review, XIV (1831), 460-461.

48. Sir Egerton Brydges, "Poetry - The Old Poets," Fraser's Magazine, X (1834), 33-47.
49. Ibid., p. 42.
50. Quarterly Review, LII (1834), 165.
51. Ibid.
52. Edinburgh Review, LXVI (1838), 263-268.
53. Oeuvres Complètes de M. Le Vicomte De Chateaubriand (Paris, 1837), II, 145.
54. Quarterly Review, LXI (1838), 430-431.
55. Ibid., p. 430.
56. Quarterly Review, LXV (1839-1840), 190-191.
57. Ibid., p. 191.
58. The Mirror, XXXII (1838), 328.
59. Edinburgh Review, LXIX (1839), 214-230.
60. Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, VIII (1840), 373-374.
61. Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, X (1842), 78-79.
62. British Quarterly Review, IV (1846), 362-363.
63. Ibid., p. 363.
64. British Quarterly Review, X (1849), 224-254.
65. Ibid., p. 254.
66. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXXII (1852), 149-152.
67. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LXV (1849), 759.
68. Reprinted in The Eclectic Magazine, XXX (1853), 364-372.
69. Ibid., p. 369.
70. British Quarterly Review, XXIX (1859), 185-214.
71. North British Review, XXX (1859), 281-308.
72. Thorpe sees anticipations of the decline of Milton's reputation as a man and poet in the emphasis on Milton's Puritan traits which some critics found very offensive. Cf. Thorpe, pp. 124-127.

73. In Characteristics. First published in the Edinburgh Review (1831).
74. Carlyle's great work Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History was first given as a series of lectures in 1840.
75. Thomas Carlyle, Lectures on Literature, ed. J. Reay Greene, (London, 1892), 157-159.
76. Ibid., p. 159.
77. The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, ed. David Masson, (London, 1896), X, 399.
78. Ibid., p. 400.
79. Ibid., XI, 56-57.
80. Ibid., II, 69-70.
81. Henry Hallam, Introduction to the Literature of Europe (London, 1876), IV, 235-244.
82. Ibid., p. 239.
83. Ibid., p. 241.
84. Henry Stebbing, "Memoir of Milton's Life and Writings," The Poetical Works of John Milton (New York, n.d.), pp. iii-xv.
85. Ibid., p. x.
86. Ibid., p. vi.
87. J. A. St. John, "Preface" to The Prose Works of John Milton (London, 1848), I, 1-x1.
88. Ibid., vii.
89. Ibid., v.
90. Ibid., xii.
91. George Gilfillan, "John Milton," Second Gallery of Literary Portraits (Edinburgh, 1849), pp. 1-39.
92. Ibid., p. 39.
93. Ibid., p. 15.
94. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
95. Ibid., pp. 24-25.

96. The Works of Walter Savage Landor, ed. T. Earle Welby and Stephen Wheeler (London, 1927-1936), XI, 189.
97. Ibid., IV, 191.
98. Ibid., XI, 222.
99. Ibid., V, 315.
100. Ibid., XI, 190.
101. Ibid., IV, 192.
102. Ibid., X, 188-189.
103. Ibid., V, 280.
104. Thorpe, p. 106.
105. The volumes of Masson's Life appeared as follows: I (1859), II (1871), III (1873), IV (1877), V (1877), VI (1880); an index was published in 1894.
106. North British Review, XVI (1852), 295-335. Thorpe believes that Masson's complete consistency of opinion definitely shows his limitations as a literary critic. He also points out that Bailey, in his Life of Milton (1915), stated that Masson's Puritan favoritism and his anti-Cavalier bias somewhat impaired the value of the biography. Thorpe agrees with this view and says that later critics in our century have labored to "de-Massonize" Milton. Cf. Thorpe, pp. 138-144.
107. Ibid., p. 305
108. Masson, Life, VI, 520.
109. Ibid., p. 556.
110. Ibid., p. 658.
111. North British Review, XVI (1852), 305.
112. Ibid., p. 330.
113. Cf. Chambers's Edinburgh Journal (1845), N.S. III, 392-394
114. Masson, Life, VI, 664.
115. Ibid., p. 673.
116. Ibid., p. 675.
117. Ibid., p. 670.

118. Walter Bagehot, "John Milton," Essays English and American, The Harvard Classics (New York, 1910), XXVIII, 165-208.
119. Ibid., p. 175.
120. Ibid., p. 178.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid., p. 194.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter IV

1. H. Taine, "Milton," Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise (Paris, 1911), II, 381-481.
2. Ibid., p. 436.
3. Ibid., p. 433.
4. Ibid., p. 451.
5. Ibid., p. 468.
6. See especially Nineteenth Century (1886), XX, 51-73; Edinburgh Review (1865), CXI, 289-327. Thorpe especially derides Taine's allegorical interpretation.
7. Edmond Scherer, "Milton et Le Paradis Perdu," Etudes sur la Littérature Contemporaine (Paris, 1882), VI, 151-194.
8. Ibid., p. 158.
9. Ibid., p. 168.
10. Ibid., p. 192.
11. F. W. Farrar, "Epochs of English Poetry," Gentleman's Magazine, CCXXIV (1868), 188-206.
12. Ibid., p. 195.
13. Quarterly Review, CXXXII-CXXXIII (1872), 393-423.
14. Ibid., p. 406.
15. Quarterly Review, CXLII (1876), 24-27.
16. Quarterly Review, CLIII (1882), 447-450.
17. British Quarterly Review, LIX (1874), 81-100.
18. British Quarterly Review, LXVII (1878), 543-546.
19. Ibid., pp. 543, 546.
20. Temple Bar, XXXIX (1873), 457-473.
21. Ibid., p. 459.
22. Ibid., p. 467.
23. John Robert Seeley, "Milton's Poetry," Macmillan's Magazine, XIX (1869), 407-421.

24. Ibid., p. 413.
25. Ibid., p. 414.
26. James Russell Lowell, "Milton," Literary Essays (Boston, 1899), IV, 58-117.
27. Ibid., p. 67.
28. Ibid., p. 82.
29. Ibid., p. 101.
30. John Addington Symonds, "The Blank Verse of Milton," Fortnightly Review, XVI (1874), 767-781.
31. Ibid., p. 780.
32. Ibid., p. 781.
33. Ibid.
34. Matthew Arnold, "A French Critic on Milton," Mixed Essays, Irish Essays And Others (New York, 1908), 178-206.
35. Ibid., p. 183.
36. Matthew Arnold, "Milton," Essays in Criticism, Second Series (London, 1913), 56-68. This essay was first given as a lecture in 1888.
37. Matthew Arnold, "On Translating Homer: Last Words," Selections from Matthew Arnold, ed. Lewis E. Gates (New York, 1897), 86.
38. Mixed Essays, p. 202.
39. "On Translating Homer," p. 87.
40. Mark Pattison, Milton (London, 1911).
41. Ibid., p. 15.
42. Ibid., p. 30.
43. Ibid., p. 170.
44. Ibid., p. 186.
45. Ibid., p. 197.
46. Edward Dowden, "The Study of English Literature," Fortnightly Review, XLIX (1887), 331-349.

47. Edward Dowden, "The Idealism of Milton," Transcripts and Studies (London, 1910), pp. 454-473. This essay first appeared in 1880.
48. Ibid., p. 458.
49. Ibid., p. 464.
50. Ibid., p. 470.
51. Ibid., p. 473.
52. Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Short Notes on English Poets," Fortnightly Review, XXXIV (1880), 708-721.
53. Ibid., pp. 716-717.
54. Ibid., p. 718.
55. Herbert New, "John Milton," Littell's Living Age, CXLVIII (1881), 515-525.
56. Ibid., p. 518.
57. George Saintsbury, "Milton," Cambridge History of English Literature, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (Cambridge, 1911), V, 95-141.
58. Ibid., p. 112.
59. Ibid., pp. 119-120.
60. Ibid., p. 122.
61. Ibid., p. 137.
62. H. M. Percival, "Introduction" to Samson Agonistes (London, 1916).
63. Ibid., p. xxv.
64. Ibid., p. xxxii.
65. A. W. Verity, "Introduction" to Milton's Samson Agonistes (Cambridge, 1912), xxiv-lxvi.
66. Ibid., p. lxi.
67. Frederick Pollock, "John Milton," Fortnightly Review, XLVIII (1890), 510-519.
68. Ibid., p. 517.
69. Francis Thompson, "John Milton," Academy, LI (1897), 357-358.

70. Ibid., p. 357.
71. Sir Walter Raleigh, Milton (London, 1900).
72. Ibid., p. 9.
73. Ibid., p. 23.
74. "Milton's Last Poems," Living Age, CCIX (1909), 252.
75. Milton, p. 88.
76. "Milton's Last Poems," p. 253.
77. Leslie Stephen, "New Lights on Milton," Quarterly Review, CXCV (1901), 103-125.
78. Ibid., p. 113.
79. Ibid., p. 123.
80. Herbert Paul, "Milton," Nineteenth Century and After, LXV (1909), 65-73.
81. Ibid., p. 66.
82. Ibid., p. 73.
83. The Spectator, CI (1908), 933-934.
84. Ibid., p. 933.
85. Alfred Austin, "Milton and Dante," Quarterly Review, CCCX (1909), 157-170.
86. Ibid., p. 161.
87. George A. Gordon, "Milton," The Atlantic Monthly, CIII (1909), 8-25.
88. Ibid., p. 9.
89. Ibid., p. 10.
90. Ibid., p. 18.
91. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
92. J. E. G. de Montmorency, "Milton and Modern Men," Living Age, CCLX (1909), 72-80. Reprinted from The Contemporary Review.
93. Ibid., p. 73.
94. Ibid., p. 80.

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